DEKKEI!!
DAN-
JUUU-
ROOOOO!!
HEY-
HO!!
NARITA-
YA!!
Shreeeek

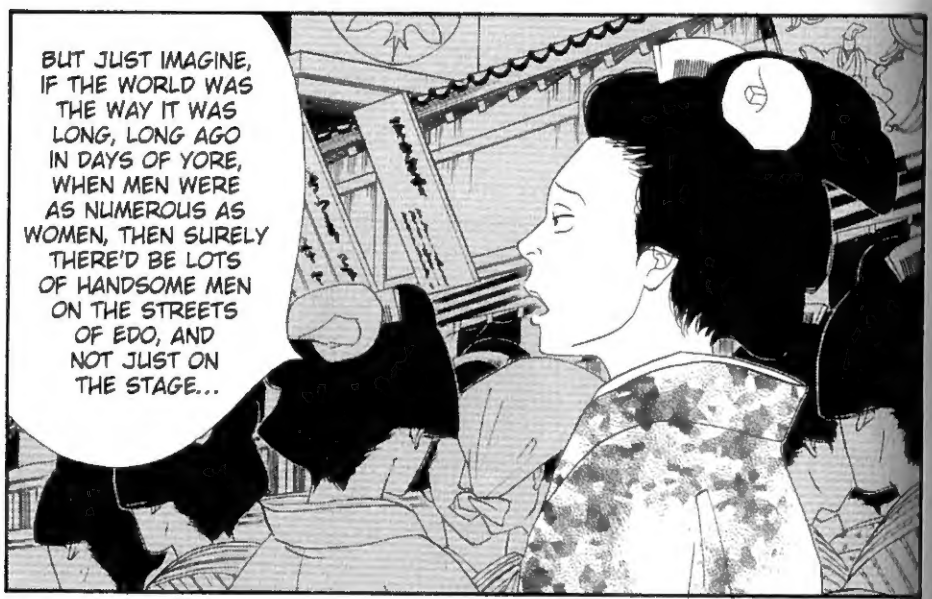
WAIT,
WAIT,
WAIT!
OVER THERE,
TWO YOUTHS
WHO ARE
STRANGERS
TO ME.

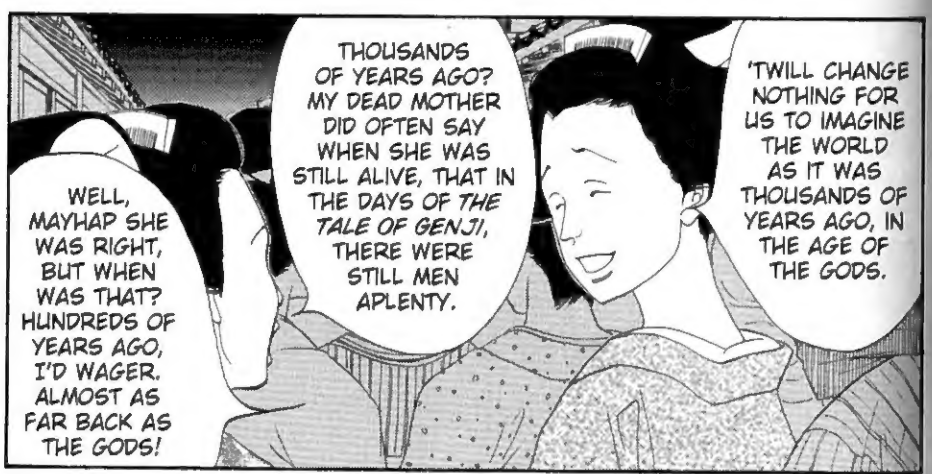
NARITA-
YA!!
DAN-
JUUU-
ROOOO!!
Shreeeek

IF ONLY THE MEN OF THIS WORLD WERE LIKE THOSE ON THE STAGE!
AYE, BY MY TROTH I AGREE!
AHH, I SAY DANJURO TODAY WAS MORE DASHING THAN EVER, FORSOOTH!

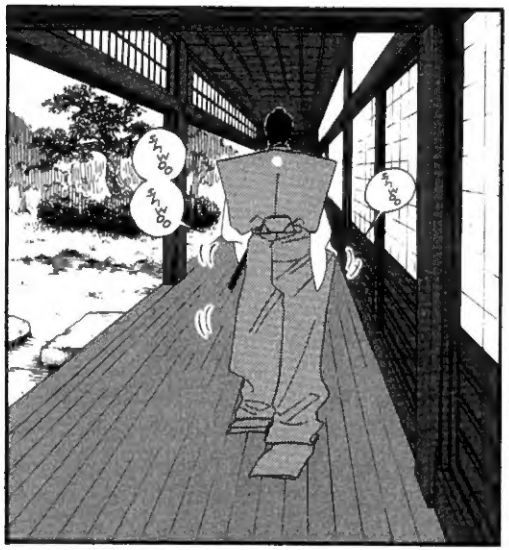
STILL DREAMING OF DANJURO, ONLY TO FIND A ROUGH, UGLY BRUTE LYING ABOUT SNORING!
AGH, TO GO HOME AFTER THIS!
HA HA HA! INDEED. BUT WITH WOMEN PLAYING ALL THE ROLES, IT STANDS TO REASON THAT THE MEN OF THE STAGE BE FAR PRETTIER THAN REAL MEN!

AYE, WELL... AYE, I S'POSE...
MAYBE SO, BUT THOU ART FORTUNATE TO HAVE A MAN IN THY HOUSE AT ALL, WHEN SO MANY CAN NE'ER BE WED.


BUT JUST IMAGINE, IF THE WORLD WAS THE WAY IT WAS LONG, LONG AGO IN DAYS OF YORE, WHEN MEN WERE AS NUMEROUS AS WOMEN, THEN SURELY THERE'D BE LOTS OF HANDSOME MEN ON THE STREETS OF EDO, AND NOT JUST ON THE STAGE...


WELL, MAYHAP SHE WAS RIGHT, BUT WHEN WAS THAT? HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO, I'D WAGER. ALMOST AS FAR BACK AS THE GODS!
THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO? MY DEAD MOTHER DID OFTEN SAY WHEN SHE WAS STILL ALIVE, THAT IN THE DAYS OF *THE TALE OF GENJI*, THERE WERE STILL MEN APLENTY.
'TWILL CHANGE NOTHING FOR US TO IMAGINE THE WORLD AS IT WAS THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, IN THE AGE OF THE GODS.

SWIP


SWOOP
SWOOP
SWOOP

SWOOP
SWOOP
SWOOP

MY LORD CONSORT.

'TIS THE INNER CHAMBERS OF EDO CASTLE, WHERE THE SHOGUN DOTH RESIDE.
OH, BUT WAIT...
THERE IS A PARADISE FULL OF BEAUTIFUL MEN, SUCH AS YOU DREAM OF, RIGHT HERE ON EARTH.

Ha ha ha ha ha
WHAT? THOU DAREST BEG TO BE EXCUSED FROM BED DUTY? THEN IT'S OFF WITH THY HEAD! SAY THY FINAL PRAYERS...
OH, O-KIN-SAN, HOW SAUCY THOU ART!

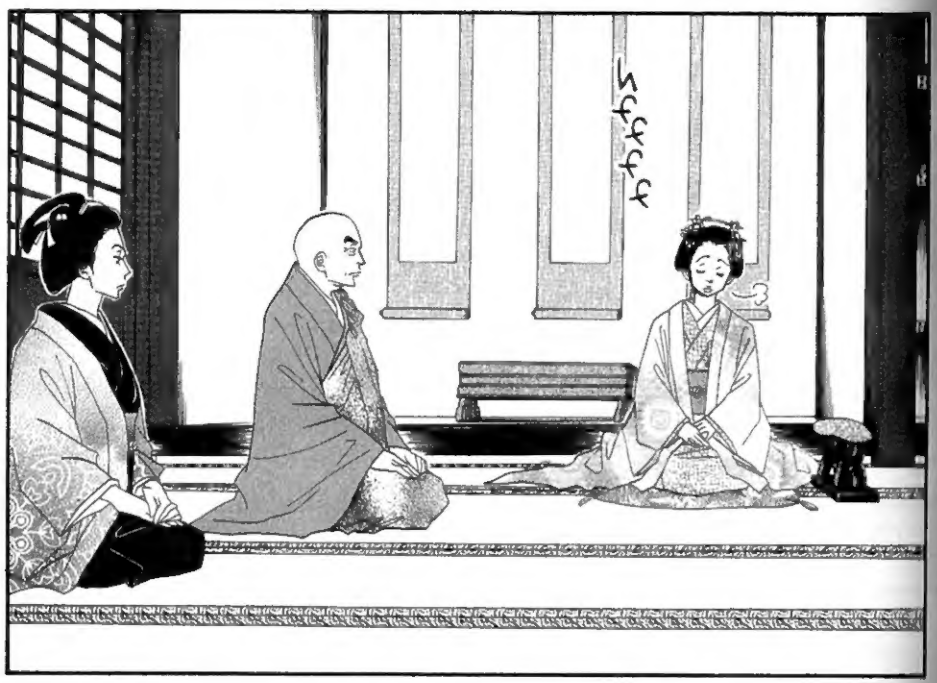
AYE, THE INNER CHAMBERS OF EDO CASTLE.
THOU, THERE, SHOW ME THY FACE!
HMM. THOU ART RATHER COMELY. I THINK I SHALL TAKE THEE AS MY COMPANION FOR THE NIGHT. COME THOU TO MY BEDCHAMBER THIS EVENING!

CHIRP
CHIRP
CHIRP
CHIRP

FOR THE ENTRANCE OF OUR LIEGE!!
BOW YE DOWN...

MM.
'TIS SHORTLY THE HOUR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

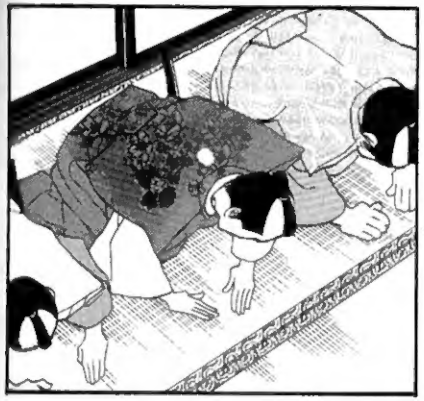
The fifth Tokugawa shogun, Tsunayoshi, reigned during the flamboyant, prosperous flowering of the Genroku Era.



SOME SPICE! A CHANGE! SOMETHING NEW!!
SOME VARIETY!!
I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS DULL LOT HERE IN THE INNER CHAMBERS!!
TOKUKO!!

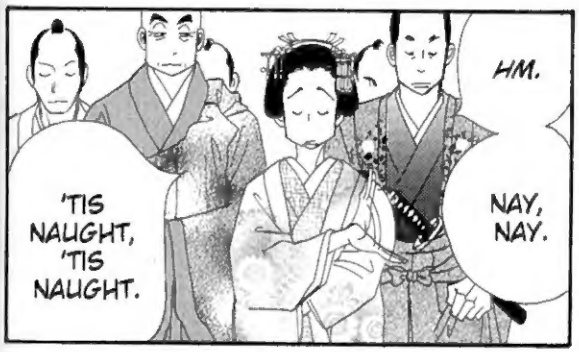
YOSHI-YASU!

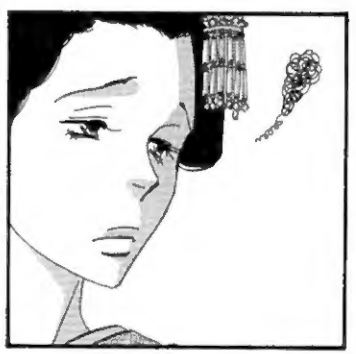
M'LORD.



RAISE THY HEAD.
THOU, IN THE PURPLE KAMI-SHIMO...
...

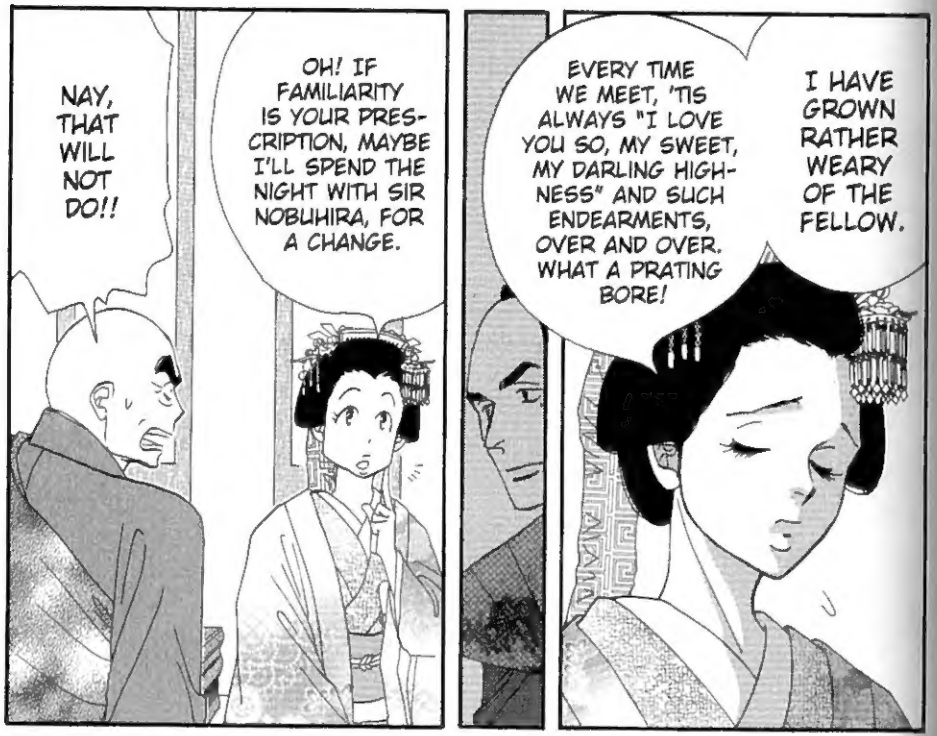
MY LORD!

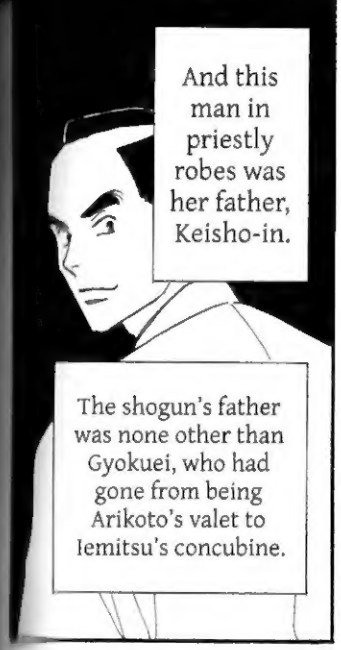

HM.
'TIS NAUGHT, 'TIS NAUGHT.
NAY, NAY.

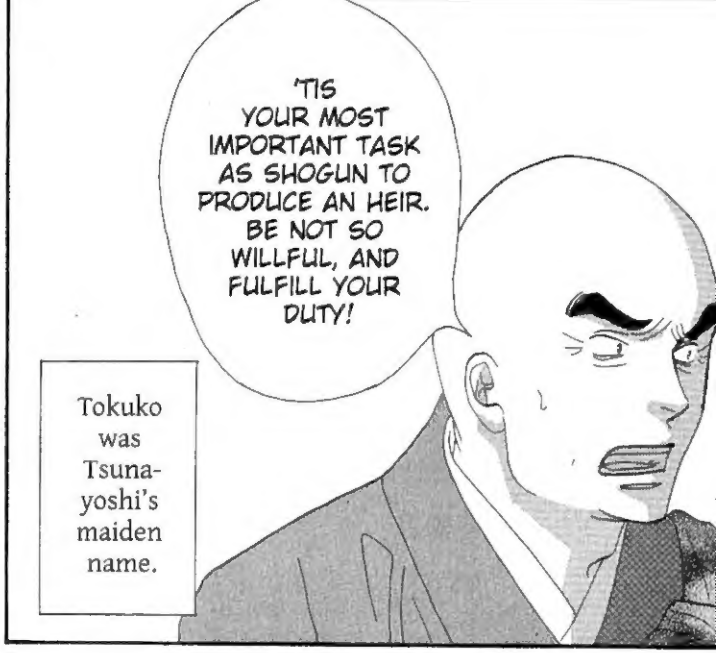


OH! HOW GOES IT WITH DENBE OF LATE?
AND YET, WITH LADY MATSU YOUR ONE AND ONLY CHILD, I CANNOT REST IN PEACE. YOU MUST BEAR MORE CHILDREN, OR AT THE VERY LEAST ANOTHER...
INDEED. INDEED!

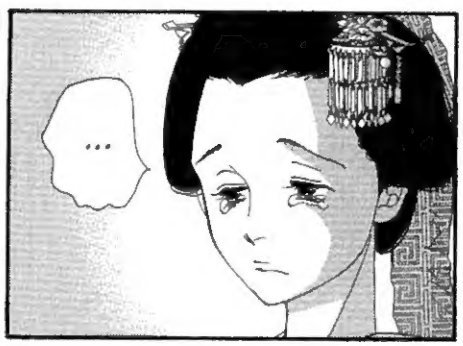
HE IS, AFTER ALL, THE FATHER OF LITTLE LADY MATSU AND HAS BEEN YOUR CONCUBINE SINCE YOURS DAYS AS LORD OF THE TATEBAYASHI DOMAIN. SURELY WITH HIM YOU CAN LIE AT EASE, E'EN HERE IN THE CLOSE CONFINES OF THE INNER CHAMBERS?
AYE!
WITH O-DEN?


NAY, THAT WILL NOT DO!!
OH! IF FAMILIARITY IS YOUR PRESCRIPTION, MAYBE I'LL SPEND THE NIGHT WITH SIR NOBUHIRA, FOR A CHANGE.
EVERY TIME WE MEET, 'TIS ALWAYS "I LOVE YOU SO, MY SWEET, MY DARLING HIGHNESS" AND SUCH ENDEARMENTS, OVER AND OVER. WHAT A PRATING BORE!
I HAVE GROWN RATHER WEARY OF THE FELLOW.


And this man in priestly robes was her father, Keisho-in.
The shogun's father was none other than Gyokuei, who had gone from being Arikoto's valet to Iemitsu's concubine.


'TIS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT TASK AS SHOGUN TO PRODUCE AN HEIR. BE NOT SO WILLFUL, AND FULFILL YOUR DUTY!
Tokuko was Tsunayoshi's maiden name.

Urgh!


...

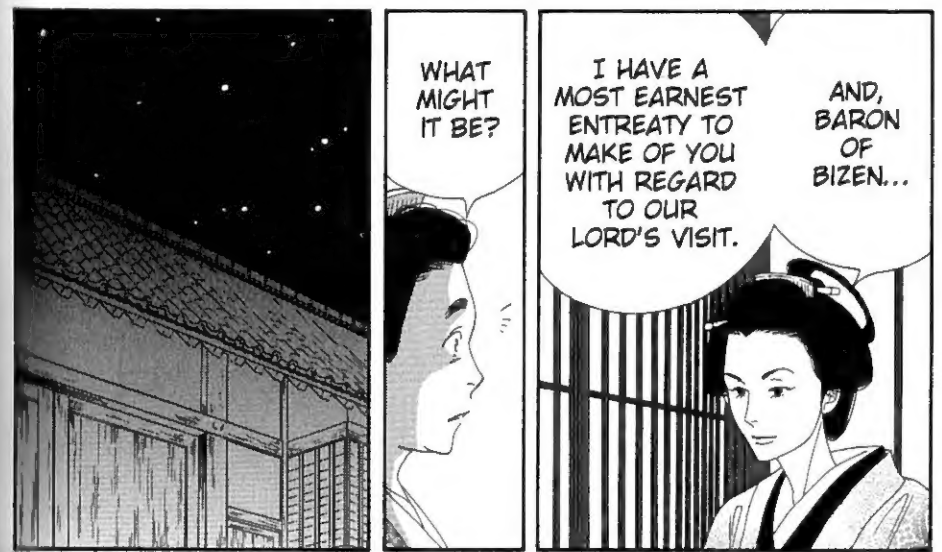
HOW IS ONE TO LIE WITH A MAN WHILE SURROUNDED BY SO MANY PEOPLE? 'TIS NOT A PLACE WHERE A PERSON CAN FEEL LIKE A HUMAN BEING!
THE INNER CHAMBERS ARE A STIFLING, OPPRESSIVE PLACE...

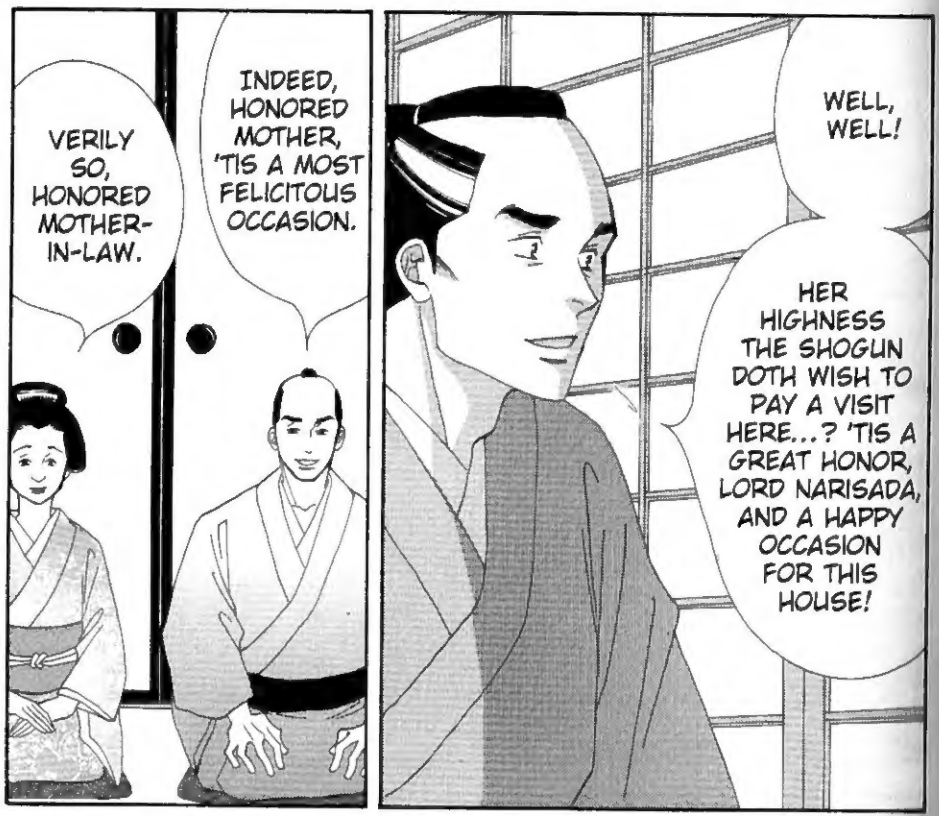
HONORED FATHER-RRRR!
PRAY PARDON!! FORGIVE ME, TOKUKO! TOKUKO!
AAAAH, TOKUKO!!
...

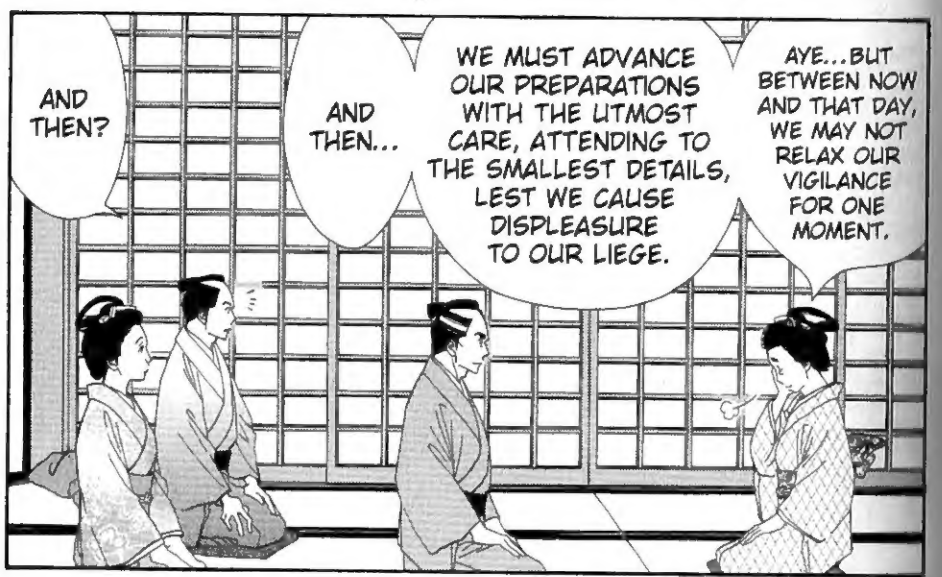
PERHAPS YOU MIGHT HOLD GATHERINGS TO ENJOY A NOH PLAY, OR SOMETHING OF THE LIKE?
MY FORMER MASTER, SIR ARIKOTO, WAS ALSO A KYOTO ARISTOCRAT, BUT HE DID NOT PUT ON AIRS LIKE THAT AFFECTED CONSORT OF YOURS!
WELL, I LIKE NOT THAT MINCING FELLOW, NOT AT ALL!
WHY NOT? HE IS MY OFFICIAL CONSORT, HONORED FATHER. WE ARE MAN AND WIFE!
YOUR HIGHNESS.
INDEED, MY LORD. MY MEANING WAS, TO HOLD ONE OUTSIDE THE CASTLE.
I HELD JUST SUCH A GATHERING LAST MONTH HERE IN EDO CASTLE, YOSHIYASU.
LEAVING THE CASTLE MAY WELL BE A REFRESHING CHANGE THAT WILL SERVE TO LIFT YOUR SPIRITS, MY LIEGE.
FOR INSTANCE, LET ME SEE...AT THE MANSION OF MAKINO NARISADA, BARON OF BIZEN.

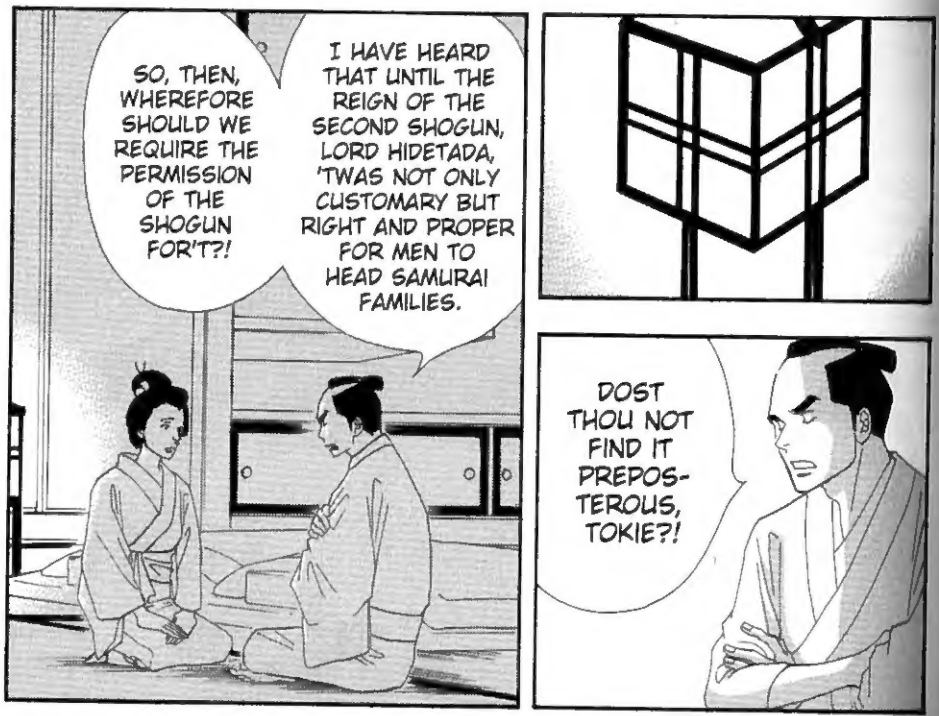
AYE, THOU MAY BE RIGHT.
HER HIGHNESS DOTH WISH TO PAY A VISIT TO MY RESIDENCE ...?!
'PON MY TROTH ...!!
Makino Narisada, Baron of Bizen, was the eldest among Tsunayoshi's Privy Councillors, and also the most trusted by her, along with Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, Baron of Dewa.

'TIS AN HONOR EXCEEDINGLY GREAT, INDEED THE HONOR OF A LIFETIME, TO RECEIVE HER HIGHNESS THE SHOGUN! I SHALL COMMISSION THE BUILDING OF A NOH STAGE FORTHWITH!!
FORSOOTH, BARON OF DEWA?!
OUR LORD DOTH SAY 'TWOULD GIVE HER GREAT PLEASURE TO ENJOY AN EVENING OF NOH AT YOUR MANSION, BARON OF BIZEN.
AYE.


WHAT MIGHT IT BE?
I HAVE A MOST EARNEST ENTREATY TO MAKE OF YOU WITH REGARD TO OUR LORD'S VISIT.
AND, BARON OF BIZEN...


VERILY SO, HONORED MOTHER-IN-LAW.
INDEED, HONORED MOTHER, 'TIS A MOST FELICITOUS OCCASION.
WELL, WELL!
HER HIGHNESS THE SHOGUN DOTH WISH TO PAY A VISIT HERE...? 'TIS A GREAT HONOR, LORD NARISADA, AND A HAPPY OCCASION FOR THIS HOUSE!


AND THEN?
AND THEN...
WE MUST ADVANCE OUR PREPARATIONS WITH THE UTMOST CARE, ATTENDING TO THE SMALLEST DETAILS, LEST WE CAUSE DISPLEASURE TO OUR LIEGE.
AYE...BUT BETWEEN NOW AND THAT DAY, WE MAY NOT RELAX OUR VIGILANCE FOR ONE MOMENT.


SO, THEN, WHEREFORE SHOULD WE REQUIRE THE PERMISSION OF THE SHOGUN FOR'T?!
I HAVE HEARD THAT UNTIL THE REIGN OF THE SECOND SHOGUN, LORD HIDETADA, 'TWAS NOT ONLY CUSTOMARY BUT RIGHT AND PROPER FOR MEN TO HEAD SAMURAI FAMILIES.

DOST THOU NOT FIND IT PREPOS-TEROUS, TOKIE?!

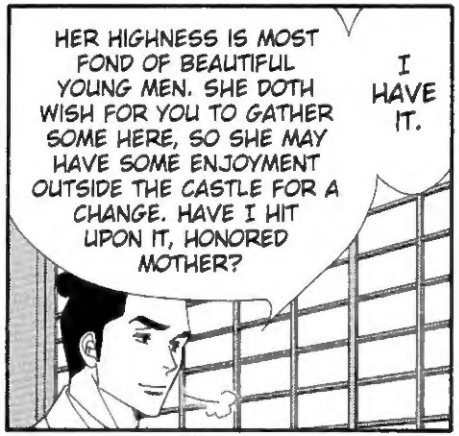
AYE, A BIT.
DOST THOU DIS-APPROVE OF THAT?

YOUR HONORED MOTHER IS MAKINO NARISADA, ONE OF OUR LORD'S MOST TRUSTED PRIVY COUNCILLORS, AND YET YOU SHOW ABSOLUTELY NO REVERENCE FOR THE SHOGUN YOURSELF.
WELL, SIR..
...

WHAT IS SO FUNNY?

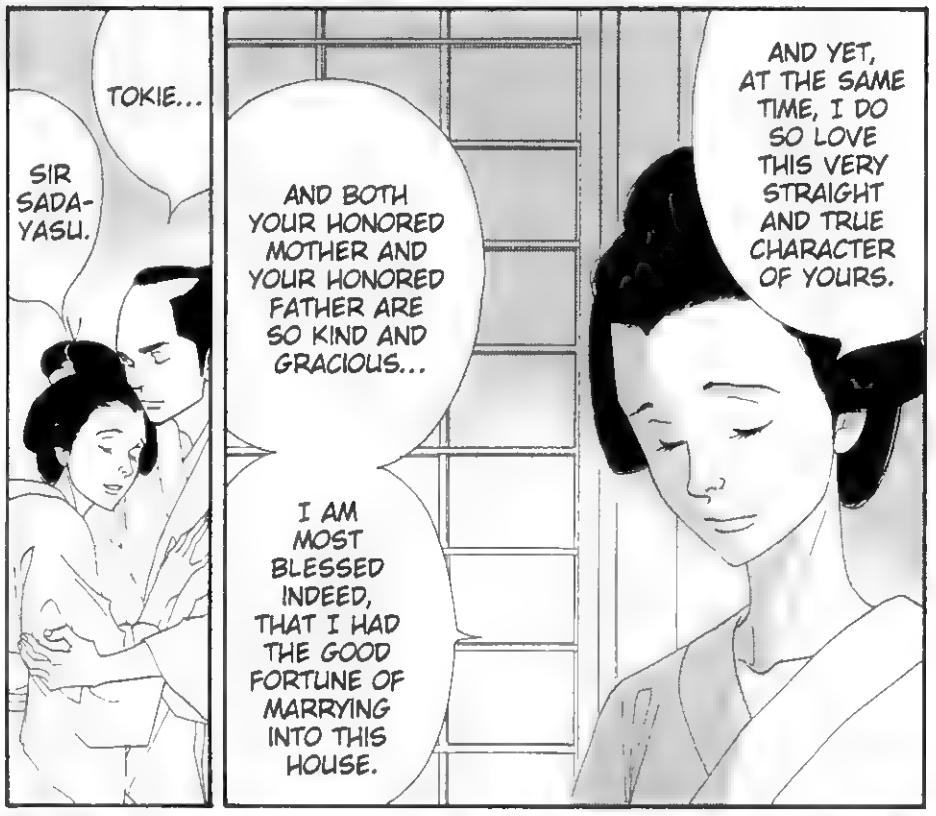
HOWEVER, TO GO HUNTING FOR LOVERS AT THE RESIDENCE OF A RETAINER IS TRULY...
WELL, I DO OFTEN HEAR THAT OUR LIEGE IS ALMOST FEARSOMELY LIVELY AND ROBUST FOR HER AGE.
SADA-YASU.

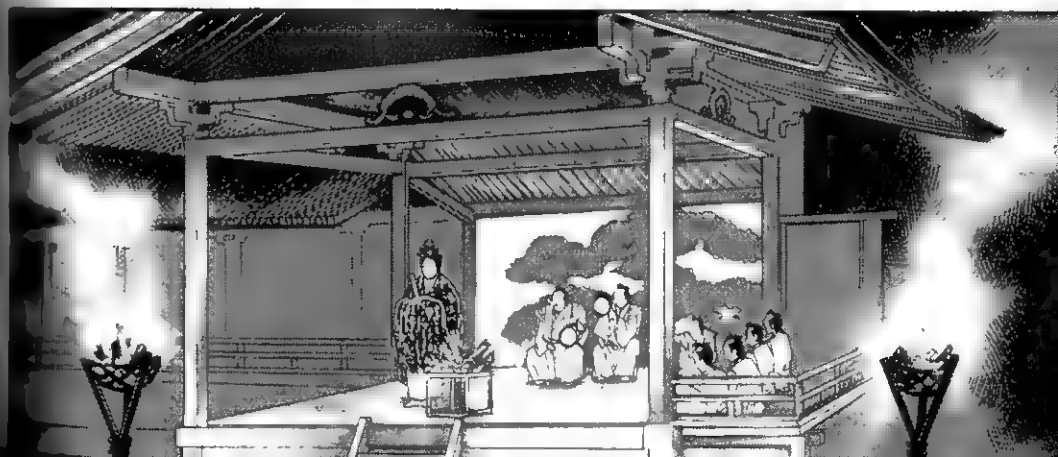
...


HER HIGHNESS IS MOST FOND OF BEAUTIFUL YOUNG MEN. SHE DOTH WISH FOR YOU TO GATHER SOME HERE, SO SHE MAY HAVE SOME ENJOYMENT OUTSIDE THE CASTLE FOR A CHANGE. HAVE I HIT UPON IT, HONORED MOTHER?
I HAVE IT.

THOU DOST RESEMBLE THY FATHER IN LOOKS ONLY, FOR THOU HAST NOT HIS PRUDENCE AND SPEAKEST RASH-LY, WITHOUT FORETHOUGHT. 'TIS MOST VEXING.
FORGET NOT ALSO THAT OUR LIEGE DID AGREE MOST KINDLY TO PERMIT THEE, A SON, TO TAKE OVER AS HEAD OF HOUSE AFTER ME. 'PON MY TROTH...
THY FATHER SPEAKETH TRUE, SADA-YASU.

SPEAK NOT IN SO DISRESPECTFUL A FASHION. 'TIS NOTHING OTHER THAN OUR LORD'S FAVOR THAT DOTH ALLOW THE MAKINO HOUSE TO PROSPER.


TOKIE...
SIR SADA-YASU.
AND BOTH YOUR HONORED MOTHER AND YOUR HONORED FATHER ARE SO KIND AND GRACIOUS...
I AM MOST BLESSED INDEED, THAT I HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE OF MARRYING INTO THIS HOUSE.
AND YET, AT THE SAME TIME, I DO SO LOVE THIS VERY STRAIGHT AND TRUE CHARACTER OF YOURS.



I WISH TO RETIRE, NARISADA. HAST THOU PREPARED A CHAMBER FOR ME? SHOW ME TO'T.
MM.
I AM TIRED.
NOW, AGURI.
...!
NO TROUBLE, NARISADA. 'TWAS INDEED A RATHER SPLENDID BANQUET.
WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL AND DELIGHTED FOR THIS HONOR, THAT YOU DID TROUBLE TO GRACE OUR HUMBLE HOME WITH YOUR EXALTED PRESENCE THIS EVENING.
YOUR HIGH-NESS.
HOWEVER, ALL OF YOU MAY WITHDRAW, BY MY LEAVE.
I THANK THEE.
I KNOW NOT IF ANY OF THEM SHALL MEET WITH YOUR HIGHNESS'S APPROVAL...
AND EACH ONE AS HANDSOME AS THE NEXT.
O-HO. WELL, WELL.
POUR ME SOME SAKE.
CERTES, I HAVE NE'ER FORGOTTEN AND DO REMEMBER IT WELL.
N-NAY... M' LORD.
HAST THOU FORGOTTEN THE MAIDEN NAME I JOKINGLY GAVE THEE, IN MY CHILDHOOD? EH, AGURI?
!!
KOTTO KOTTO KOTTO
MY LORD!
SOME SAKE!

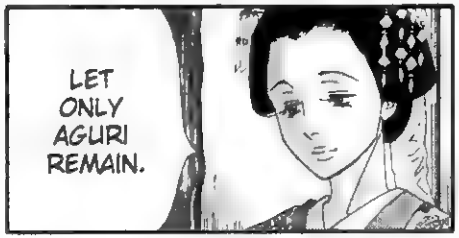
I BEG YOU MOST EARNESTLY TO PUT ASIDE YOUR MEMORIES OF THE TIME YOU RULED THE TATEBAYASHI DOMAIN! TAKE PITY ON THIS OLD BODY, WHICH WOULD LONG HAVE BEEN BARRED FROM SUCH SERVICE WERE I IN THE INNER CHAMBERS!
I PRAY YOU, MY LORD, TO RECONSIDER!

!

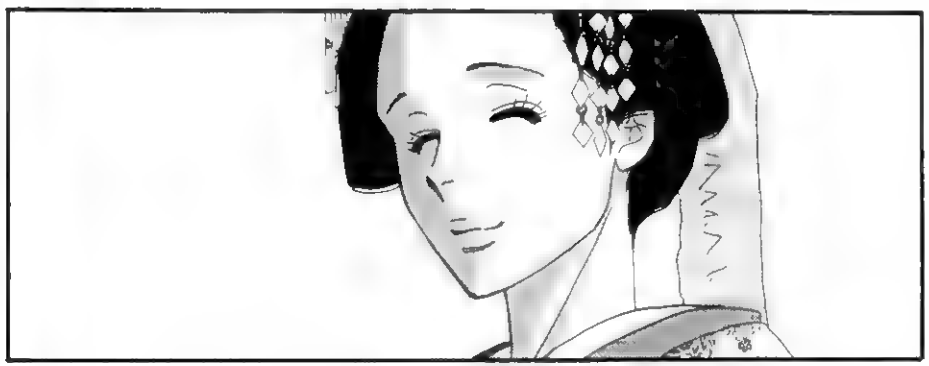
I LIKE NOT TO BE COMMAN-DED.

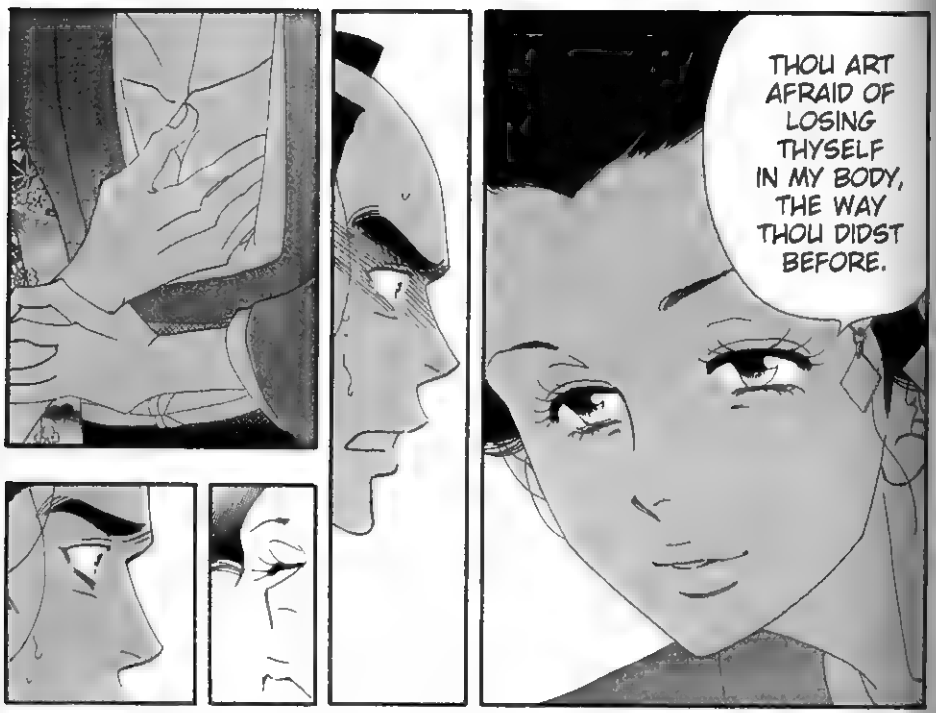
AGURI...I CANNOT PUT ASIDE MY MEMORIES OF BEDDING THEE IN TATEBAYASHI. THEY HAVE STAYED WITH ME ALWAYS.
'TIS I WHO MUST BE PITIED, AGURI. THE INNER CHAMBERS ARE A STIFLING, OPPRESSIVE PLACE.
ATTENDANTS IN THE BED-CHAMBER, ALL WITH THEIR EARS PRICKED UP...NO TAKING TO BED ANY MAN OVER THE AGE OF FIVE AND THIRTY...THIS FORBIDDEN, THAT FORBIDDEN.

THOU MAYEST WITHDRAW NOW ALSO, NARISADA.
D-DID SOMETHING MEET WITH YOUR DISFAVOR, MY LIEGE?! I AM MOST MORTIFIED!!
Y-YOUR HIGH-NESS?!


LET ONLY AGURI REMAIN.

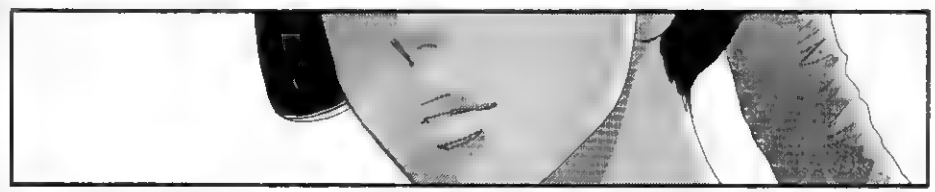
...MY HUSBAND TO STAY, M'LORD...?
...
YOU...
WISH...



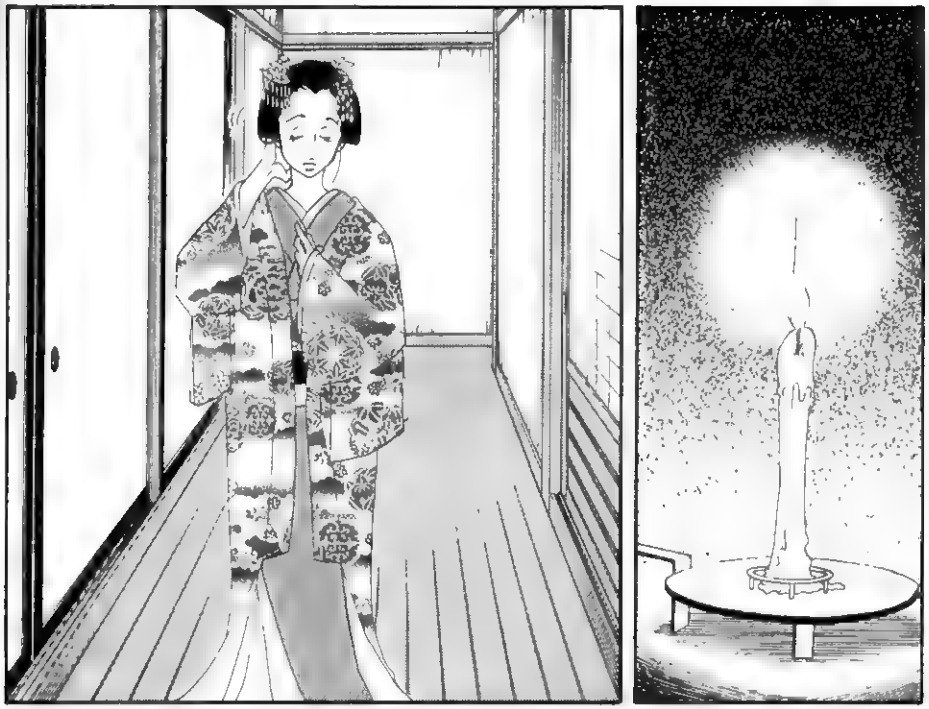

THOU ART AFRAID OF LOSING THYSELF IN MY BODY, THE WAY THOU DIDST BEFORE.

SLAY ME, MY LORD, RATHER THAN THIS!
BY YOUR HAND, I PRAY YOU!!
I BEG OF YOU, MY LIEGE!!

I LOVE THEE...

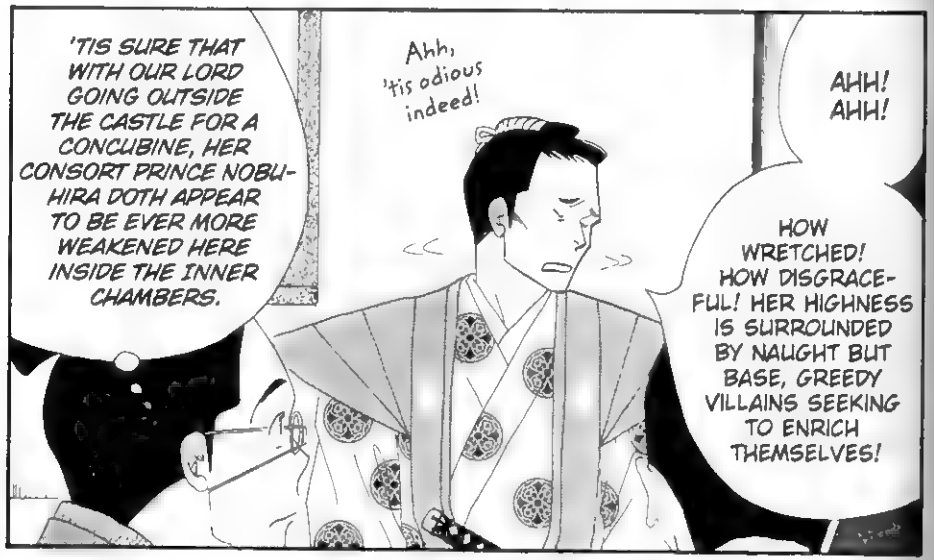


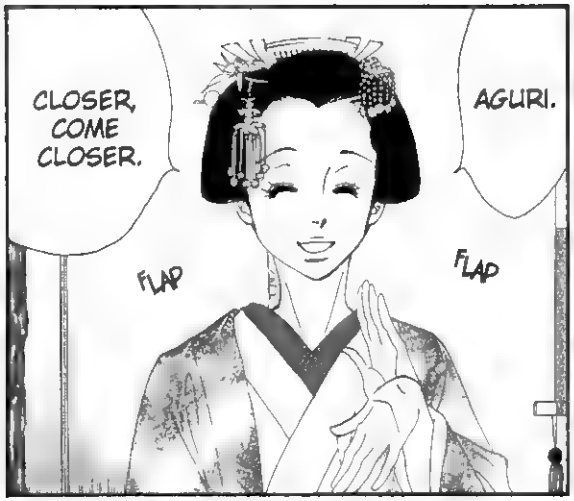
MM-HM.
CERTAINLY I SHALL SLAY THEE WITH MINE OWN HAND, IF THOU DOST FAIL TO PERFORM THY MANLY FUNCTION TONIGHT.
BUT I DO KNOW, AGURI, WHEREFORE THOU DOST PETITION ME THUS SO DESPER-ATELY.


'TWAS A MOST ENJOYABLE EVENING.
I SHALL COME AGAIN.

MY...
'TIS... HONORED FATHER.. MY HONORED MOTHER..
Nnngh!
Nmmmmgh!
...

AYE, YOUR EXCELLENCY, I HAVE HEARD SIMILAR RUMORS, INDEED.
MOREOVER, THIS HUSBAND, AGURI I BELIEVE HE IS CALLED, IS A GRIZZLED OLD FELLOW MORE ADVANCED IN AGE THAN MYSELF!
IF THOU CANST IMAGINE IT, THAT SHAMELESS WOMAN DID PRESENT HER OWN HUSBAND TO OUR LIEGE, IN RETURN FOR WHICH SHE WAS MADE LORD OF SEKIJUKU CASTLE IN THE SHIMŌSA DOMAIN!

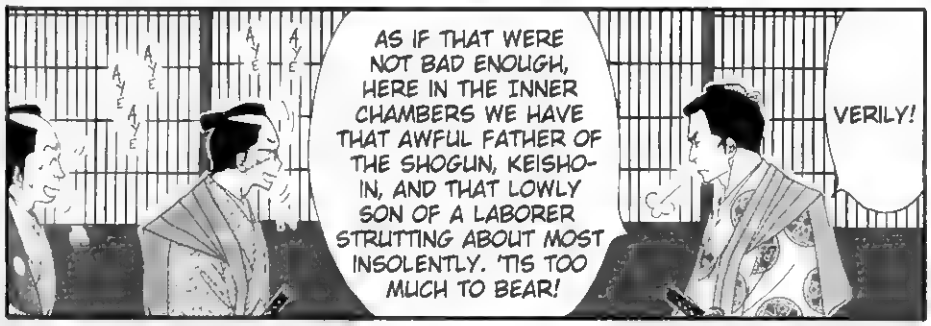

'TIS SURE THAT WITH OUR LORD GOING OUTSIDE THE CASTLE FOR A CONCUBINE, HER CONSORT PRINCE NOBUHIRA DOTH APPEAR TO BE EVER MORE WEAKENED HERE INSIDE THE INNER CHAMBERS.
Ahh, 'tis odious indeed!
AHH! AHH!
HOW WRETCHED! HOW DISGRACEFUL! HER HIGHNESS IS SURROUNDED BY NAUGHT BUT BASE, GREEDY VILLAINS SEEKING TO ENRICH THEMSELVES!



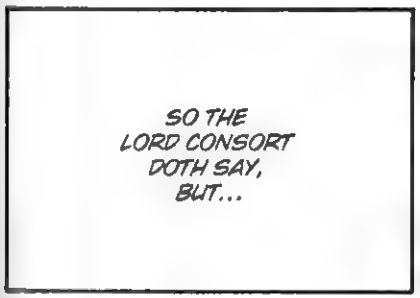
Tsunayoshi visited the Makino mansion thirty-two times after that initial evening.

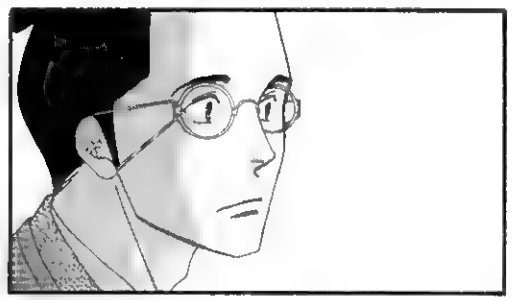
HER HIGHNESS SEEMS TO BE A FREQUENT GUEST AT THE RESIDENCE OF HER PRIVY COUNCILLOR, MAKINO NARISADA.
HAST THOU HEARD, AKIMOTO?

OOOPS...
Y-YES, M'LORD!
OSANA! AKIMOTO! DO NOT YE AGREE 'TIS SO?!


AYE
AYE
AYE
AYE
AS IF THAT WERE NOT BAD ENOUGH, HERE IN THE INNER CHAMBERS WE HAVE THAT AWFUL FATHER OF THE SHOGUN, KEISHO-IN, AND THAT LOWLY SON OF A LABORER STRUTTING ABOUT MOST INSOLENTLY. 'TIS TOO MUCH TO BEAR!
VERILY!

...BUT IT DOTH CAUSE ME MUCH CHAGRIN TO HAVE THE INNER CHAMBERS REMAIN THE UNTRAMMELED PRESERVE OF THAT BASE DENBE AND ODIOUS KEISHO-IN.
I AM MYSELF ALREADY FOUR AND THIRTY YEARS OF AGE. I HAVE NOT THE SMALLEST WISH ANYMORE TO DRAW THE GAZE OF OUR AMOROUS, MAN-CRAZY LIEGE...


SO THE LORD CONSORT DOTH SAY, BUT...



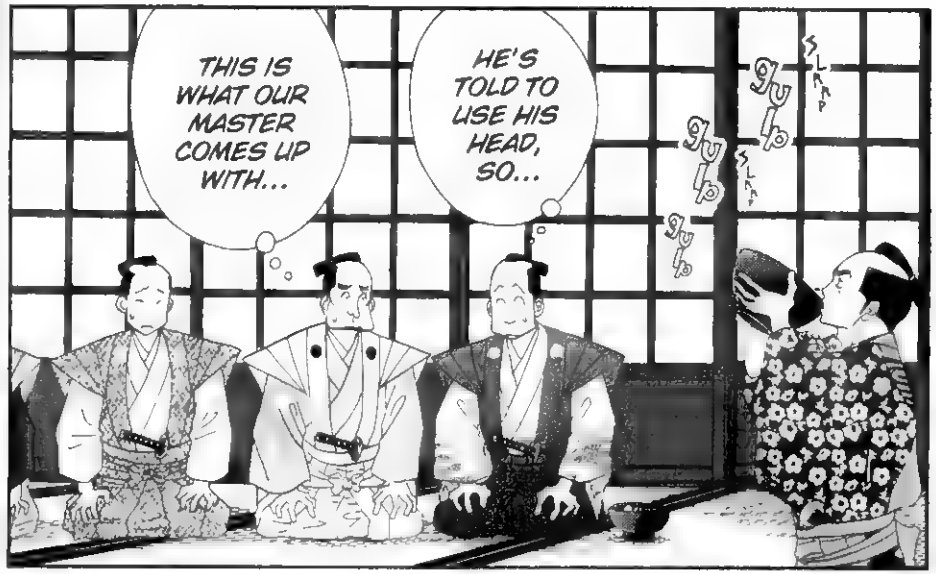
AND SO, AKIMOTO, I HAVE HATCHED A PLAN.
...IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IN FACT HE DOTH STILL HARBOR WARM FEELINGS FOR OUR LIEGE.

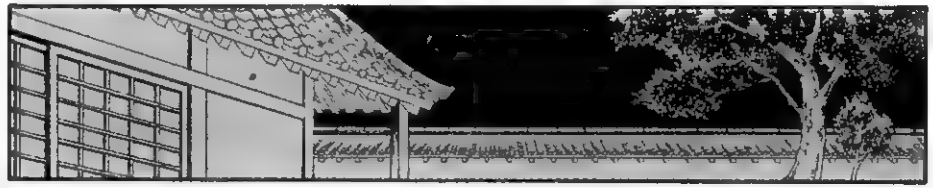
'TIS MY THOUGHT TO BRING A YOUNG COURT NOBLE HERE FROM KYOTO TO PRESENT TO HER HIGHNESS.
'TIS MOST INGENIOUS. IF THIS YOUNG NOBLE SHOULD GET HER HIGHNESS WITH CHILD, THEN YOUR EXCELLENCY'S POSITION IN THE INNER CHAMBERS WILL BE MOST STRENGTHENED INDEED, AS THE DEFENDER OF THE CHILD'S FATHER.
AHA!

I HAVE ALREADY EXCHANGED SEVERAL LETTERS WITH THE MAN I HAVE IN MIND, AND HE HATH RESPONDED THAT SOON HE SHALL BE COMING DOWN TO EDO.
VERILY SO. THE THIRD SHOGUN IEMITSU'S MOST DEARLY BELOVED CONCUBINE, O-MAN, WAS ALSO A YOUNG ARISTOCRAT FROM KYOTO.

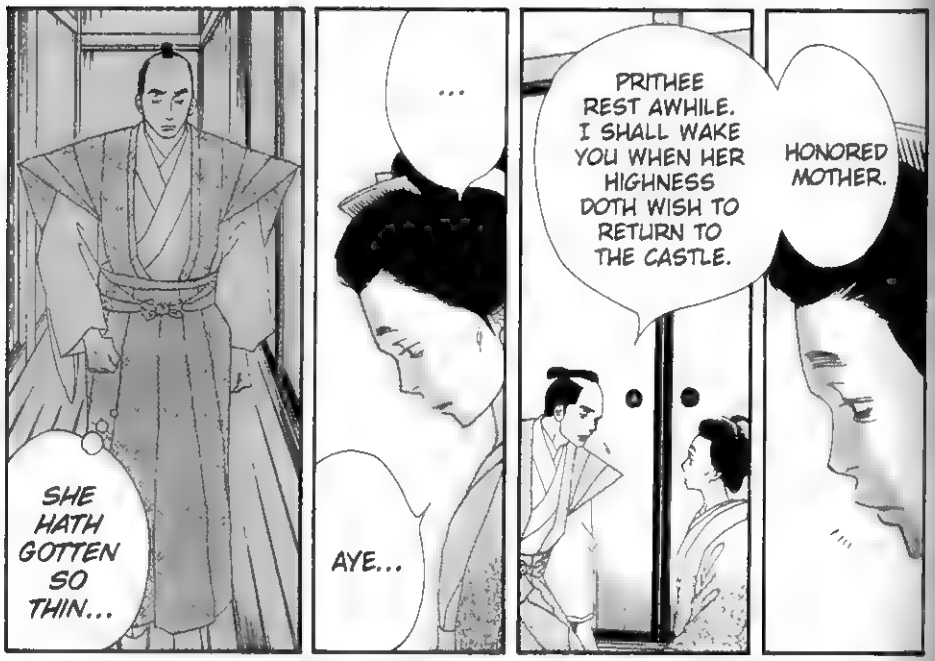
BUT WHAT DOES NOT ENDEAR YOU TO ME IS THIS MEWLING HELPLESSNESS YOU DO EVINCE TOO OFTEN! INDEED, I AM GETTING HEARTILY TIRED OF HAVING YOU COME RUNNING TO ME TO SOLVE ALL OF YOUR PROBLEMS!
LISTEN HERE, THE FACT THAT YOU, FATHER OF LADY MATSU THE PRESENT HEIR OF THE TOKUGAWA FAMILY, BE THE LOW-BORN SON OF AN ODD-JOBBING GROUNDSKEEPER, DOTH INDEED ENDEAR YOU TO ME, INSTEAD OF THE OPPOSITE.
NOW USE YOUR OWN HEAD FOR A CHANGE!!
Slurp
M' LORD!
BREAK THEM ALL!
Plop

WHAT?! HER HIGHNESS HATH GONE AGAIN TONIGHT TO THE MANSION OF MAKINO NARISADA?!
SIR KEISHO-IN, YOUR HONOR..
HMMM... 'TIS ALREADY HER FIFTH TIME THIS MONTH.
WELL, SHE WAS ALREADY MOST FOND OF AGURI LONG ERE SHE BECAME SHOGUN.
WHAT SHALL YOU DO?!
YOU ASK *ME* WHAT YOU SHOULD DO?!
OH, SIR KEISHO-IN, YOUR HONOR.. WHAT SHALL I DO?

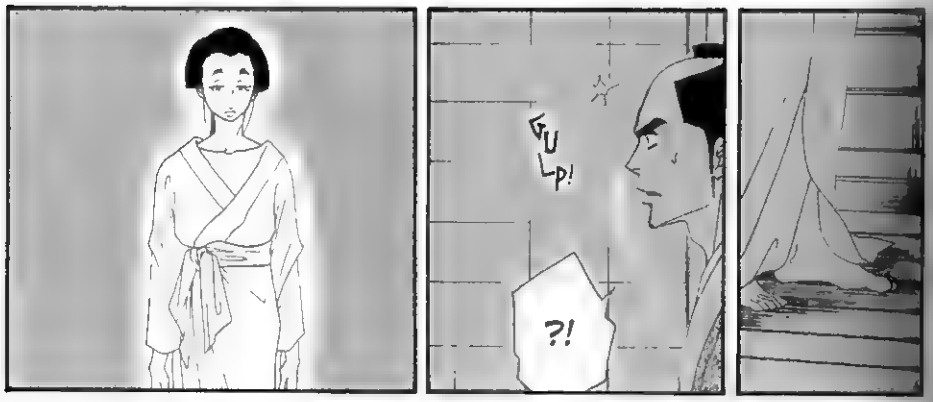

THIS IS WHAT OUR MASTER COMES UP WITH...
HE'S TOLD TO USE HIS HEAD, SO...
GULP
GULP
GULP

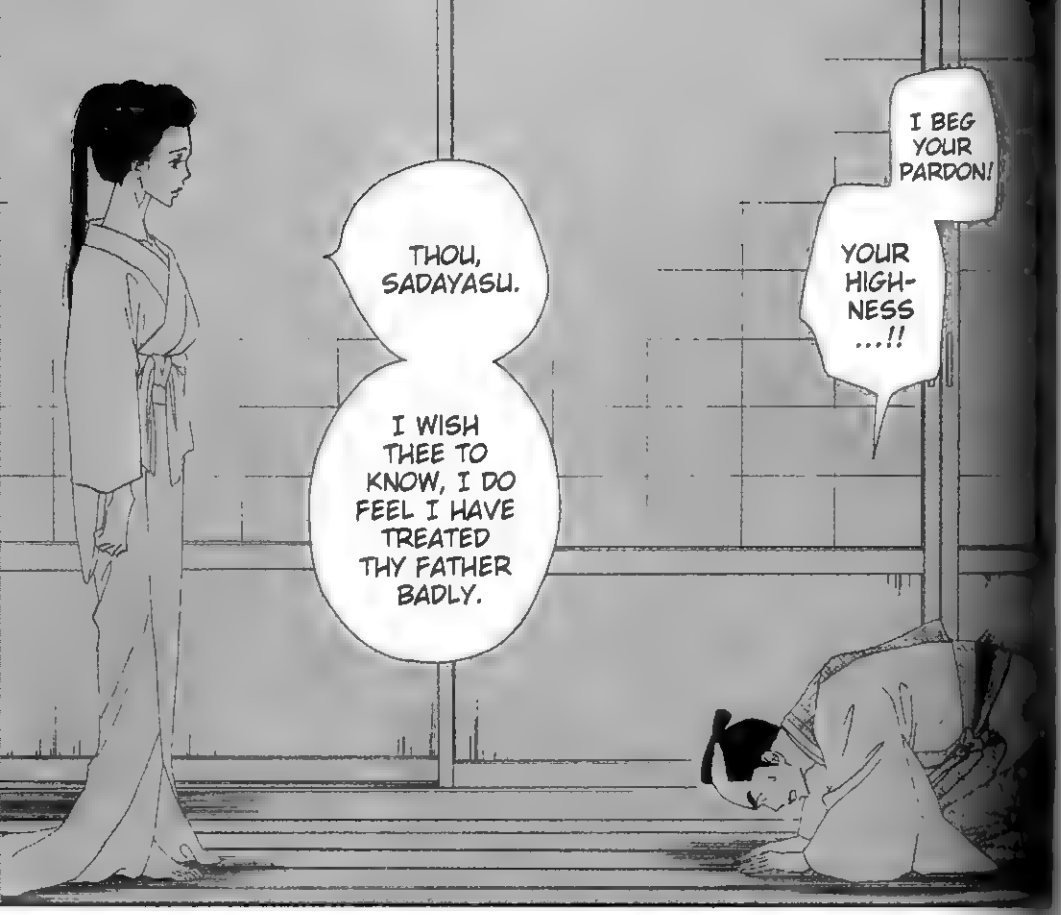


THIS MAN...
...MAY NOT HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT.
THOU, AGURI.
DOST THOU DARE TO SLEEP IN FRONT OF THE SHOGUN?


SHE HATH GOTTEN SO THIN...
...
AYE...
PRITHEE REST AWHILE. I SHALL WAKE YOU WHEN HER HIGHNESS DOTH WISH TO RETURN TO THE CASTLE.
HONORED MOTHER.

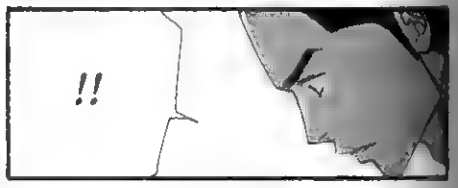
I KNOW NOT HOW MANY TIMES I DID WISH TO MURDER OUR LIEGE AND THEN TAKE MY OWN LIFE...
THIS HOUSE HATH BECOME A LIVING HELL SINCE THAT DAY!


GULP!
?!

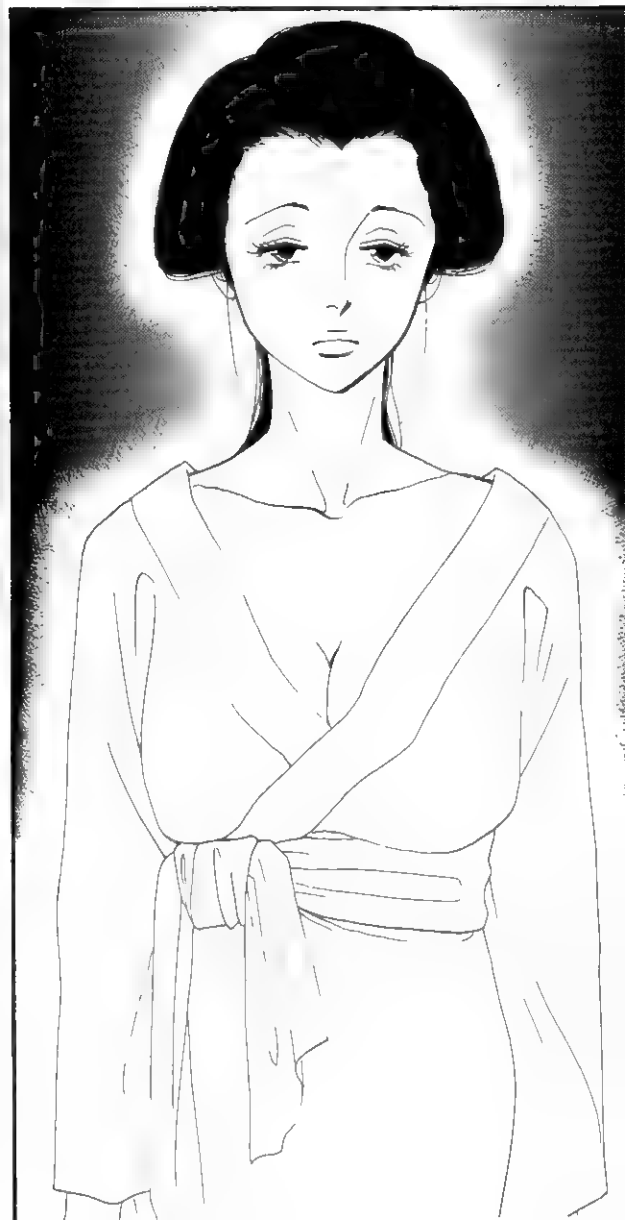

I BEG YOUR PARDON!
YOUR HIGH-NESS ...!!
THOU, SADAYASU.
I WISH THEE TO KNOW, I DO FEEL I HAVE TREATED THY FATHER BADLY.

SADA-YASU.
OH...!!
VERILY, YOUR HIGHNESS?! 'TIS--

CONSE-QUENTLY, I THINK I SHALL RELEASE AGURI FROM SUCH SERVICE HENCE-FORTH.

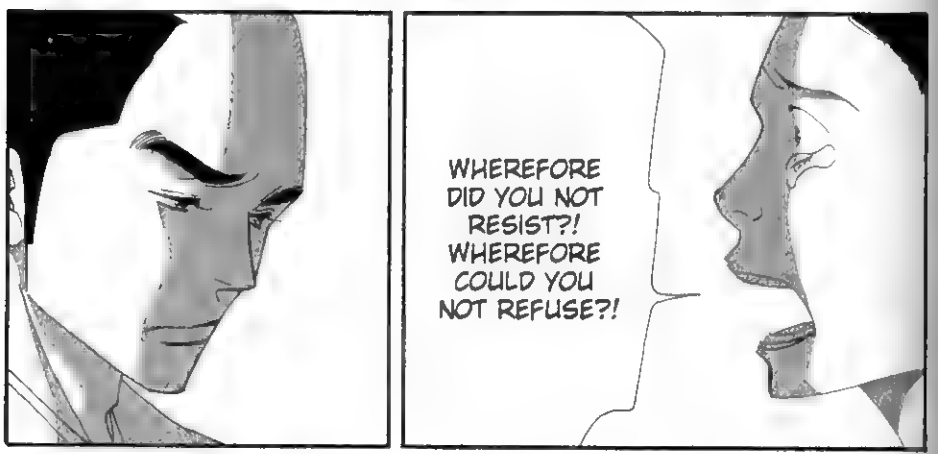

!!

SADA-YASU.



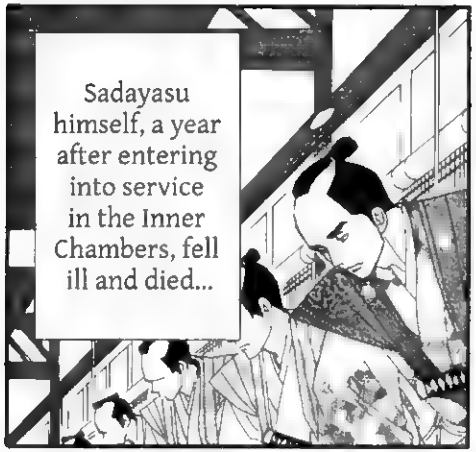
WHERE-
FORE?

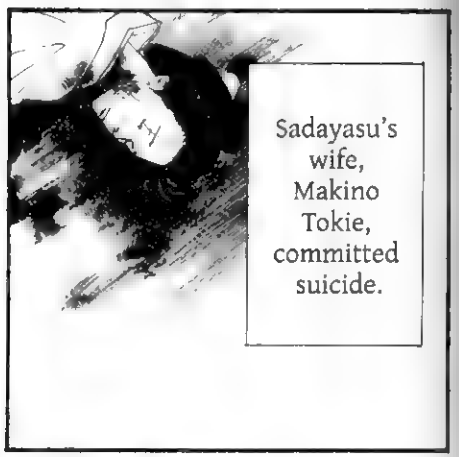
WHERE-
FORE...?!
WHERE-
FORE...?
WHEREFORE
MUST YOU
ENTER
THE INNER
CHAMBERS?!

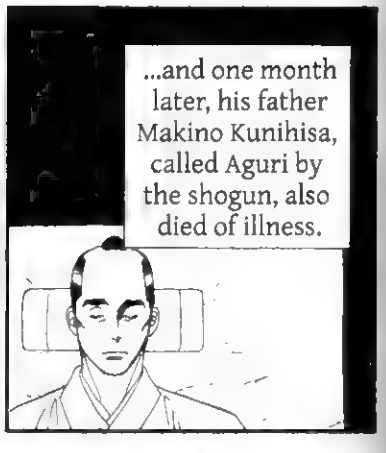

WHEREFORE
DID YOU NOT
RESIST?!
WHEREFORE
COULD YOU
NOT REFUSE?!

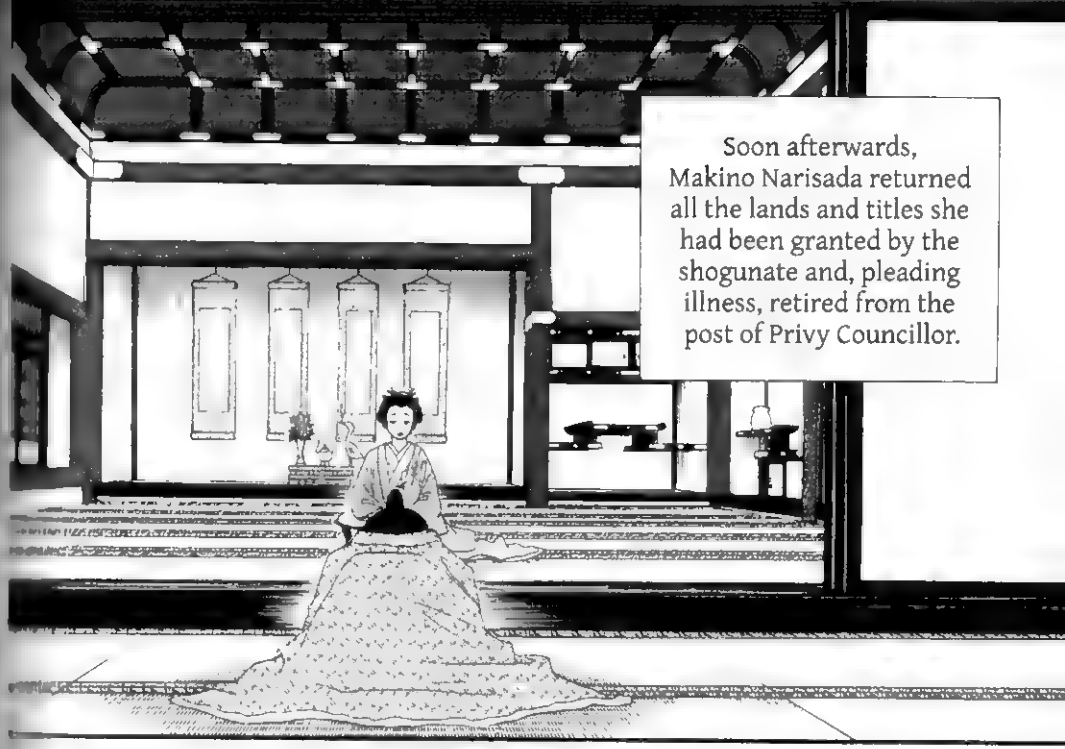
THOU
DOST SO
RESEMBLE
THY
FATHER.

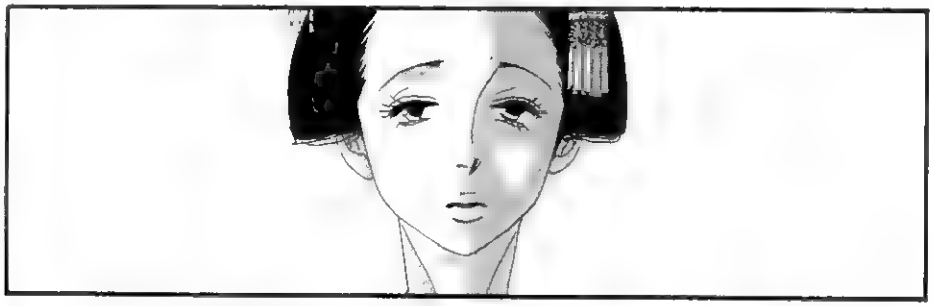
THOU WILT SURELY FIND ANOTHER HUSBAND.


Sadayasu himself, a year after entering into service in the Inner Chambers, fell ill and died...

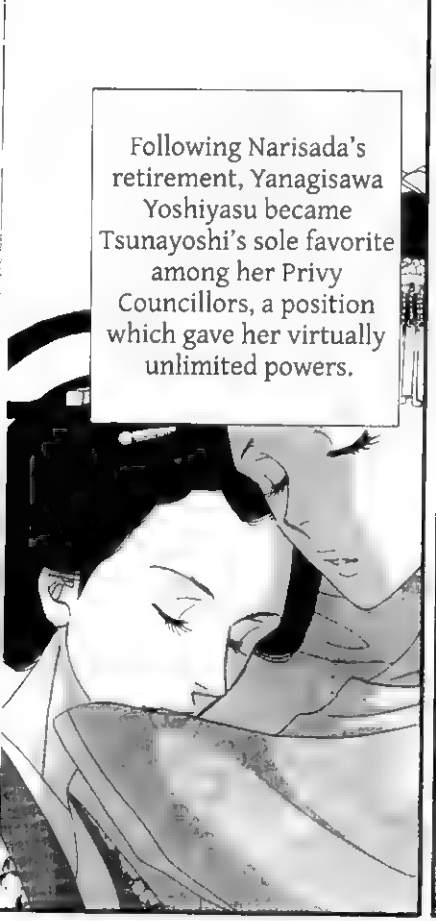

Sadayasu's wife, Makino Tokie, committed suicide.


...and one month later, his father Makino Kunihisa, called Aguri by the shogun, also died of illness.


Soon afterwards, Makino Narisada returned all the lands and titles she had been granted by the shogunate and, pleading illness, retired from the post of Privy Councillor.

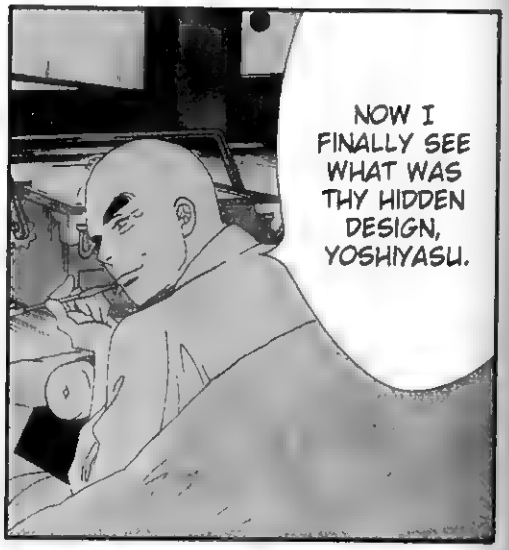


YOSHI-YASU.
IN-DEED...
HOW LONELY IT IS WITH HER GONE.
NARISADA WAS SO KIND, AND LIKE A MOTHER TO ME. I DID LOVE HER SO.


Following Narisada's retirement, Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu became Tsunayoshi's sole favorite among her Privy Councillors, a position which gave her virtually unlimited powers.

IF NARISADA WAS MY MOTHER, THEN THOU ART MY PRECIOUS LITTLE SISTER.
THOU MUST NE'ER LEAVE ME LIKE THIS, BUT STAY ALWAYS BY MY SIDE.
YOUR HIGH-NESS...

I KNOW NOT WHAT YOU MEAN.
M'-LORD.


NOW I FINALLY SEE WHAT WAS THY HIDDEN DESIGN, YOSHIYASU.

SIR EMONNOSUKE HATH ARRIVED FROM KYOTO.
PRINCE NOBU-HIRA, MY LORD.

...BUT SHE HATH HER OWN MIND ABOUT SUCH MATTERS.
'TIS PLAIN HIS MOTIVE IS TO PRESENT THE FELLOW TO TOKUKO AS A CONCUBINE...

AYE, I HAVE HEARD IT. HIS NAME, I BELIEVE, IS EMONNOSUKE.
BUT I DID KNOW THAT BEFORE. NOW, HAST THOU HEARD THE LATEST PIECE OF NEWS? THAT CONSORT OF TOKU-KO'S HATH PREVAILED UPON SOME KYOTO COURTIER TO ENTER THE INNER CHAMBERS... WELL, HE IS DUE TO ARRIVE ON THE MORROW.
THOU ART, AS EVER, A QUITE FORMIDABLE WOMAN.

I AM MOST HONORED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, PRINCE NOBUHIRA, MY LORD.

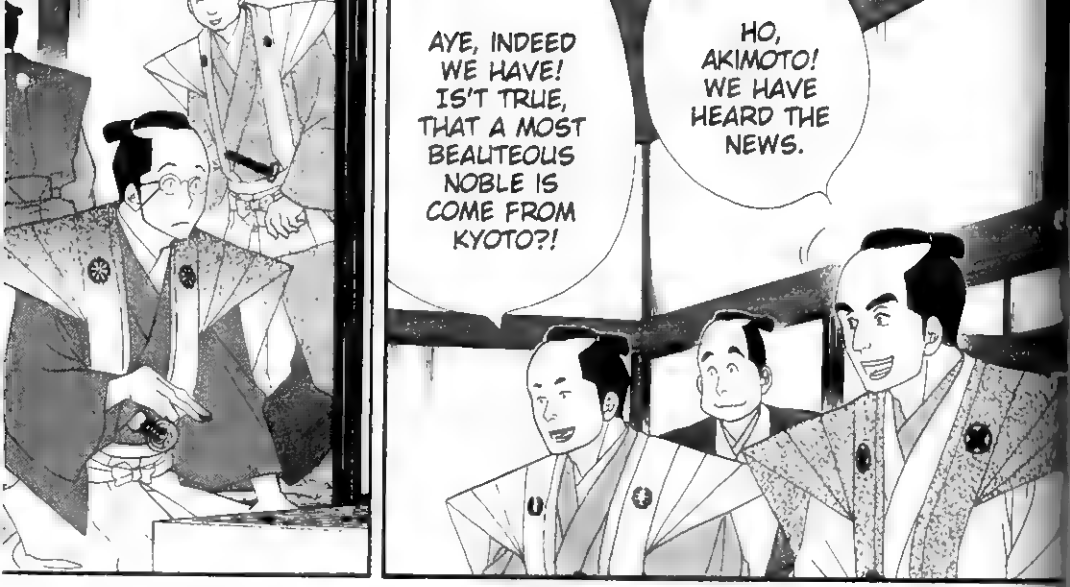
AH! I HAVE AWAITED THIS DAY MOST EAGERLY, EMONNOSUKE!

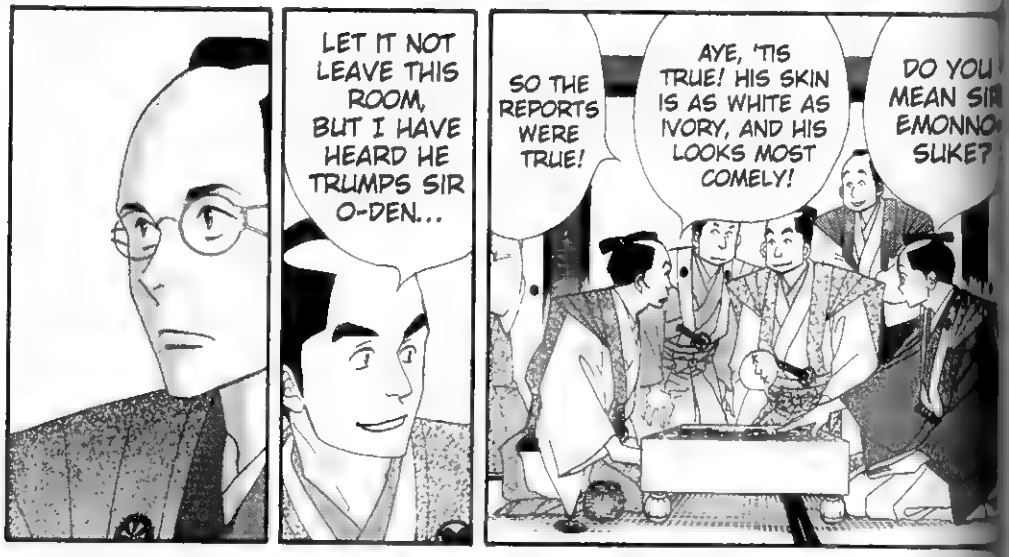
Ōoku

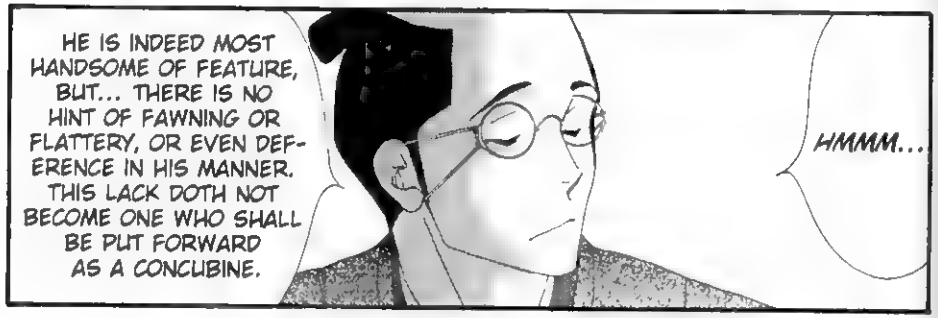
● THE INNER CHAMBERS

Ōoku

THE INNER CHAMBERS




LET IT NOT LEAVE THIS ROOM, BUT I HAVE HEARD HE TRUMPS SIR O-DEN...
SO THE REPORTS WERE TRUE!
AYE, 'TIS TRUE! HIS SKIN IS AS WHITE AS IVORY, AND HIS LOOKS MOST COMELY!
DO YOU MEAN SIR EMONNO SUKE?

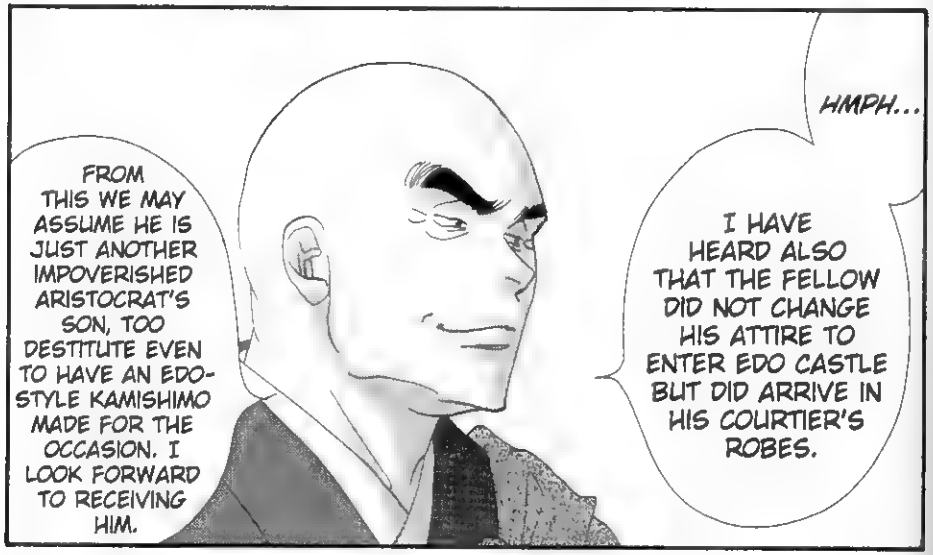

HE IS INDEED MOST HANDSOME OF FEATURE, BUT... THERE IS NO HINT OF FAWNING OR FLATTERY, OR EVEN DEFERENCE IN HIS MANNER. THIS LACK DOTH NOT BECOME ONE WHO SHALL BE PUT FORWARD AS A CONCUBINE.
HMMM...

Ōoku

THE INNER CHAMBERS

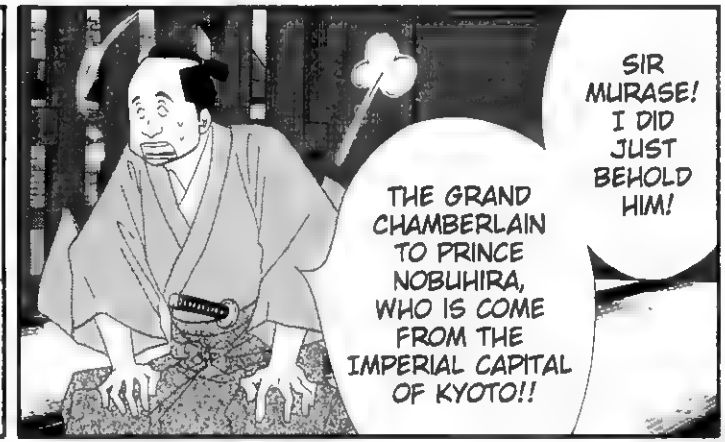
NO MATTER HOW FINE HIS LOOKS, 'TIS DOUBTFUL HE COULD E'ER BE THE EQUAL OF SIR ARIKOTO, LORD IEMITSU'S CONCUBINE AND LATER SENIOR CHAMBERLAIN OF THESE INNER CHAMBERS.
A HANDSOME BEAU HE MAY BE, BUT I AM NOT SO EASILY IMPRESSED BY THAT AS THEE.

'TIS HARDLY NEWS YOU BRING ME—I HAVE HEARD IT LONG AGO!!
'TIS REPORTED THAT A KYOTO NOBLE BY THE NAME OF EMONNOSUKE IS COME TO THE INNER CHAMBERS, AND THAT HE BE FEARSOMELY BEAUTEOUS!!
SIR KEISHO-IN, SIR KEISHO-IN!!

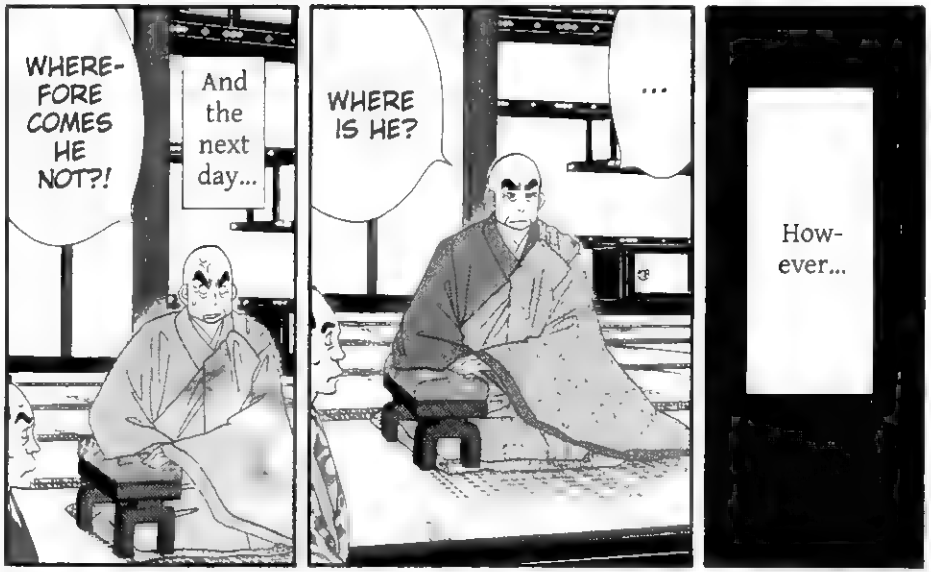

FROM THIS WE MAY ASSUME HE IS JUST ANOTHER IMPOVERISHED ARISTOCRAT'S SON, TOO DESTITUTE EVEN TO HAVE AN EDO-STYLE KAMISHIMO MADE FOR THE OCCASION. I LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING HIM.
HMPH...
I HAVE HEARD ALSO THAT THE FELLOW DID NOT CHANGE HIS ATTIRE TO ENTER EDO CASTLE BUT DID ARRIVE IN HIS COURTIER'S ROBES.

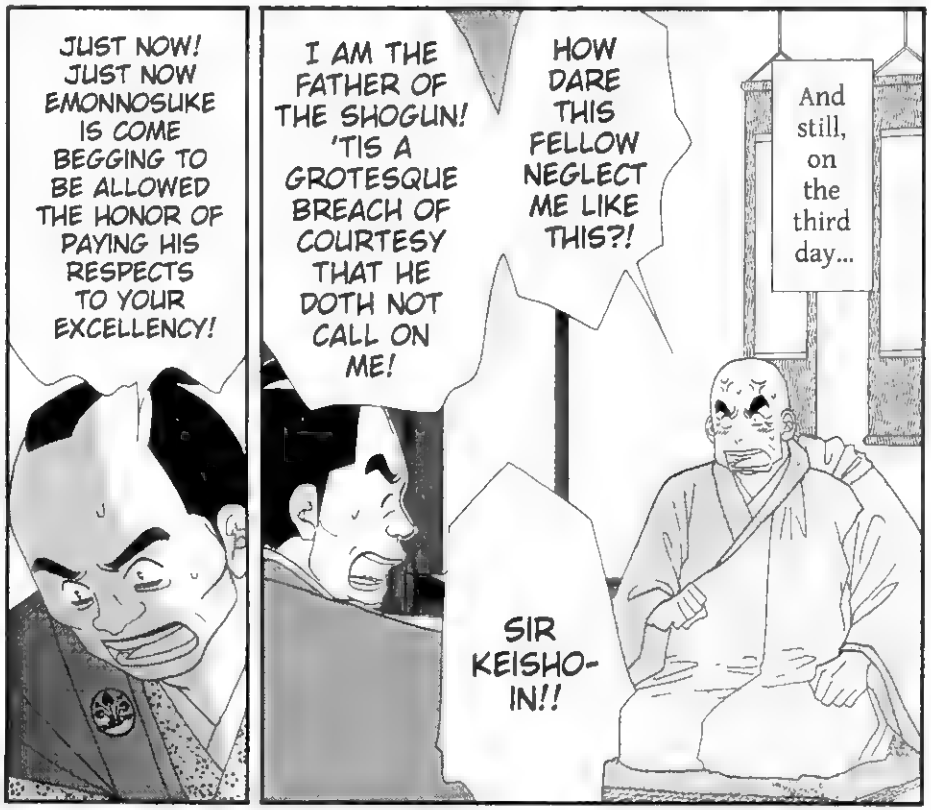
MY WORDS WERE TO STAY IN THIS ROOM ONLY AND DID NOT SUGGEST ANYTHING AT ALL.
NAY.
HO-HO!
SO YOU SUGGEST, DO YOU, THAT SIR O-DEN DOTH FAWN MOST UNCTUOUSLY UPON HER HIGHNESS?

...AYE.

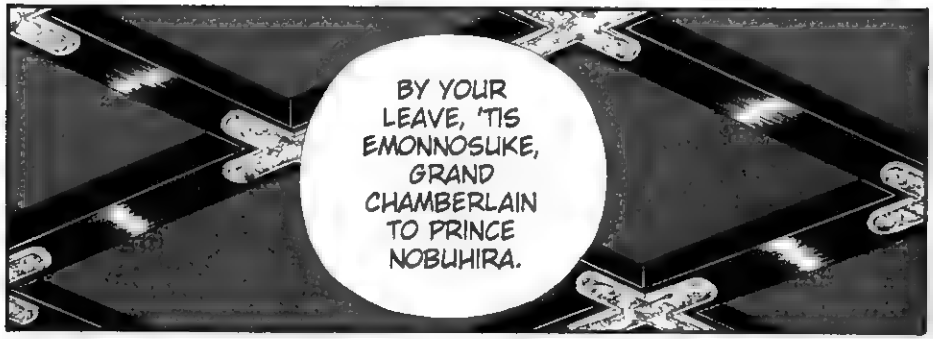

THE GRAND CHAMBERLAIN TO PRINCE NOBUHIRA, WHO IS COME FROM THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL OF KYOTO!!
SIR MURASE! I DID JUST BEHOLD HIM!

WELL, I DID GET A GLANCE AT HIM IN THE CORRIDOR EARLIER, AND VERILY, SIR, I MUST SAY HE IS A MOST HANDSOME BEAU!!
HIS NAME IS EMONNO-SUKE, I BELIEVE.
ALL THE INNER CHAMBERS ARE ABUZZ WITH NAUGHT BUT TALK OF HIM.


WHERE-FORE COMES HE NOT?!
And the next day...
WHERE IS HE?
...
How-ever...

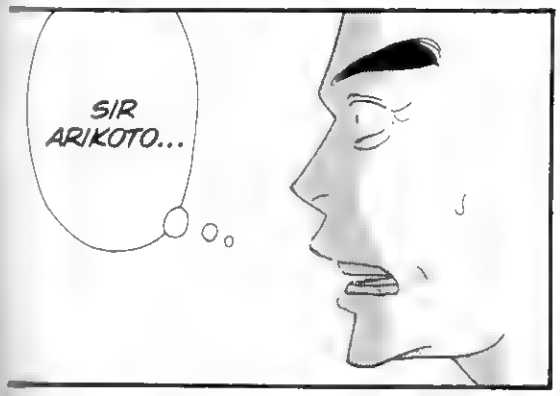

JUST NOW! JUST NOW EMONNOSUKE IS COME BEGGING TO BE ALLOWED THE HONOR OF PAYING HIS RESPECTS TO YOUR EXCELLENCY!
I AM THE FATHER OF THE SHOGUN! 'TIS A GROTESQUE BREACH OF COURTESY THAT HE DOTH NOT CALL ON ME!
HOW DARE THIS FELLOW NEGLECT ME LIKE THIS?!
And still, on the third day...
SIR KEISHO-IN!!

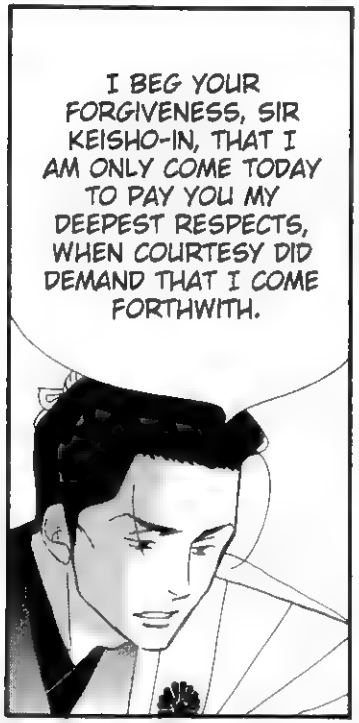
FIE UPON HIM..LET ME AT LEAST SNICKER AT HIS POOR KYOTO ROBES!
...
LET HIM THROUGH AT ONCE!

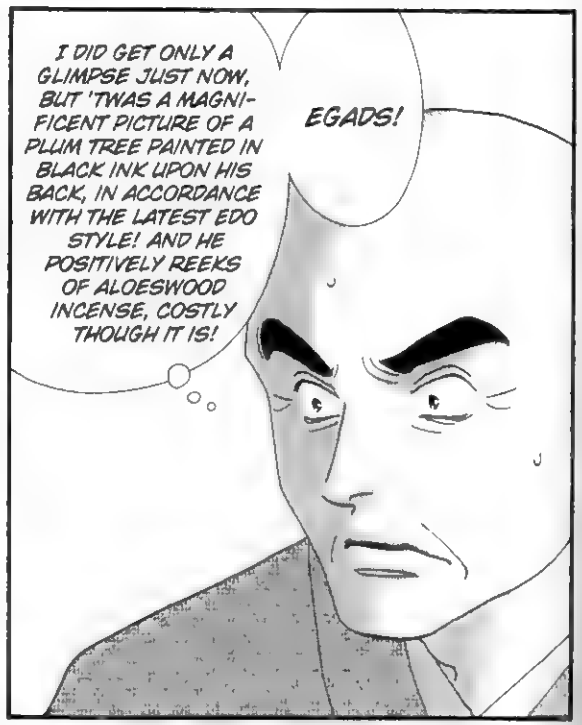

BY YOUR LEAVE, 'TIS EMONNOSUKE, GRAND CHAMBERLAIN TO PRINCE NOBUHIRA.

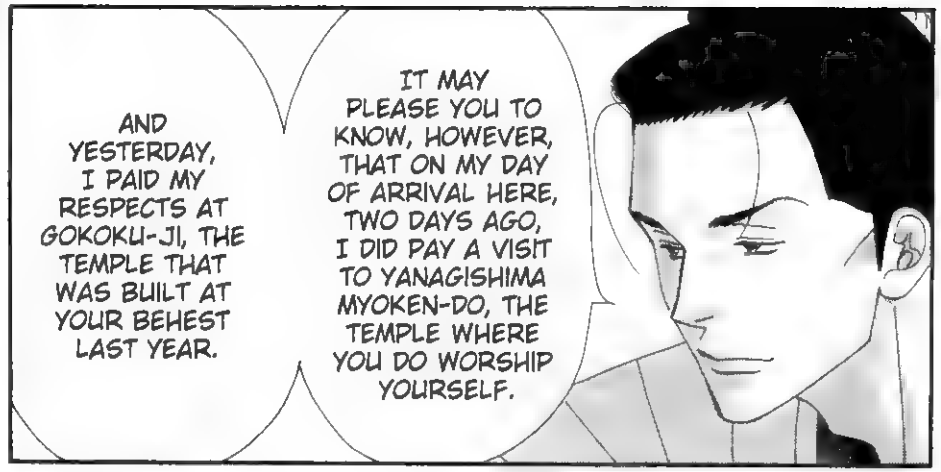
MY NAME IS EMONNOSUKE, AND I HAVE RECENTLY ENTERED INTO SERVICE HERE IN THE INNER CHAMBERS.

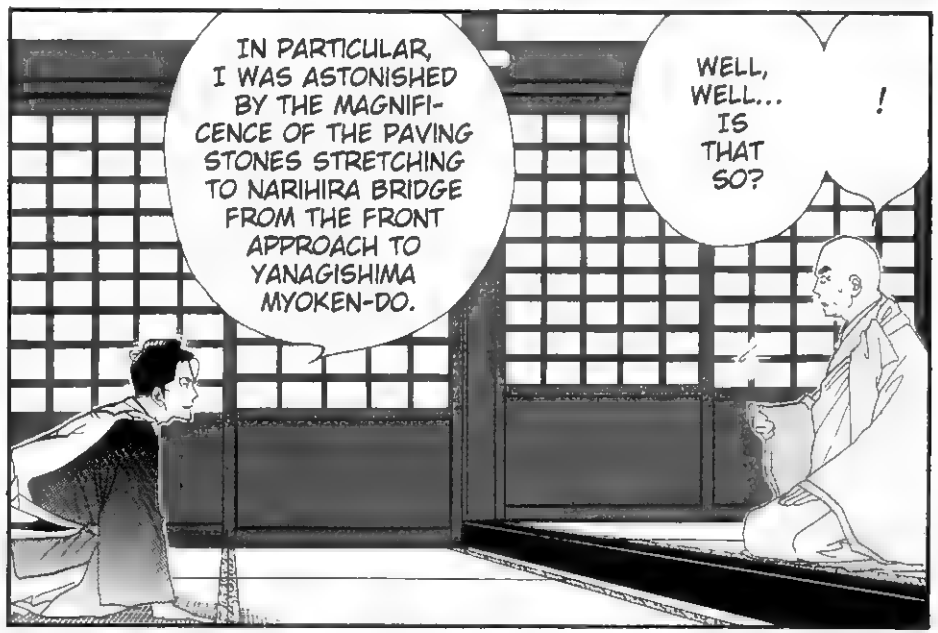
Shh...


SIR ARIKOTO...

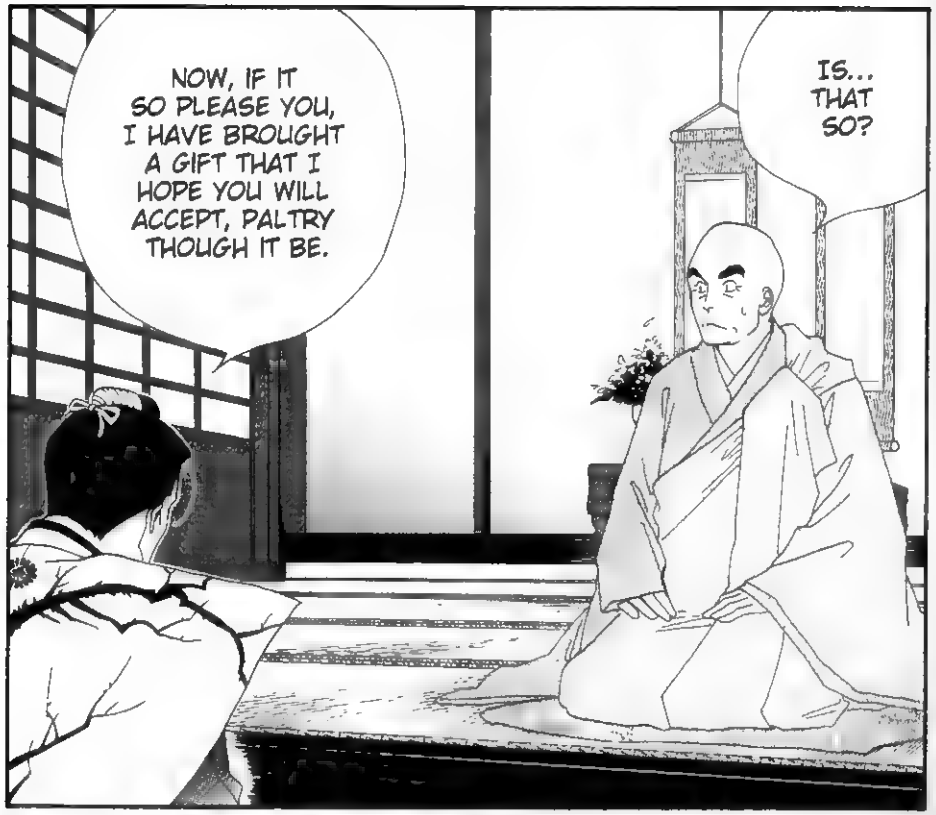

I BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS, SIR KEISHO-IN, THAT I AM ONLY COME TODAY TO PAY YOU MY DEEPEST RESPECTS, WHEN COURTESY DID DEMAND THAT I COME FORTHWITH.

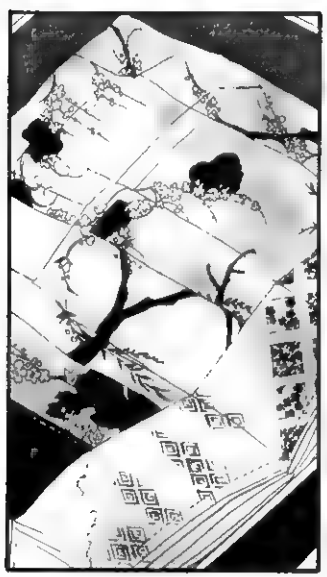

I DID GET ONLY A GLIMPSE JUST NOW, BUT 'TWAS A MAGNIFICENT PICTURE OF A PLUM TREE PAINTED IN BLACK INK UPON HIS BACK, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LATEST EDO STYLE! AND HE POSITIVELY REEKS OF ALOESWOOD INCENSE, COSTLY THOUGH IT IS!
EGADS!

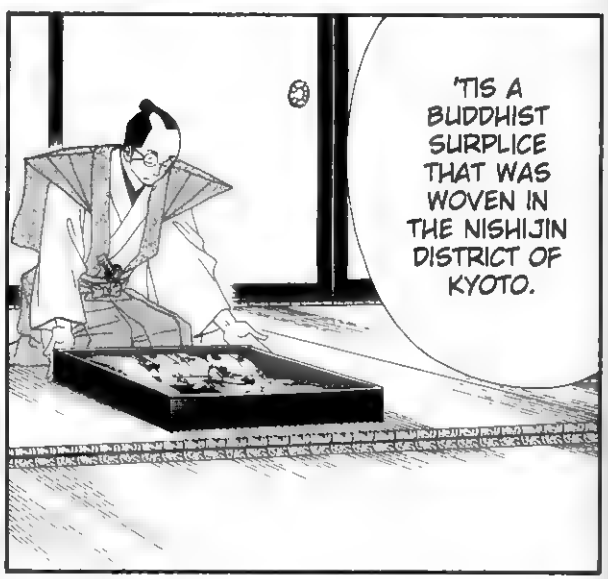

AND YESTERDAY, I PAID MY RESPECTS AT GOKOKU-JI, THE TEMPLE THAT WAS BUILT AT YOUR BEHEST LAST YEAR.
IT MAY PLEASE YOU TO KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT ON MY DAY OF ARRIVAL HERE, TWO DAYS AGO, I DID PAY A VISIT TO YANAGISHIMA MYOKEN-DO, THE TEMPLE WHERE YOU DO WORSHIP YOURSELF.

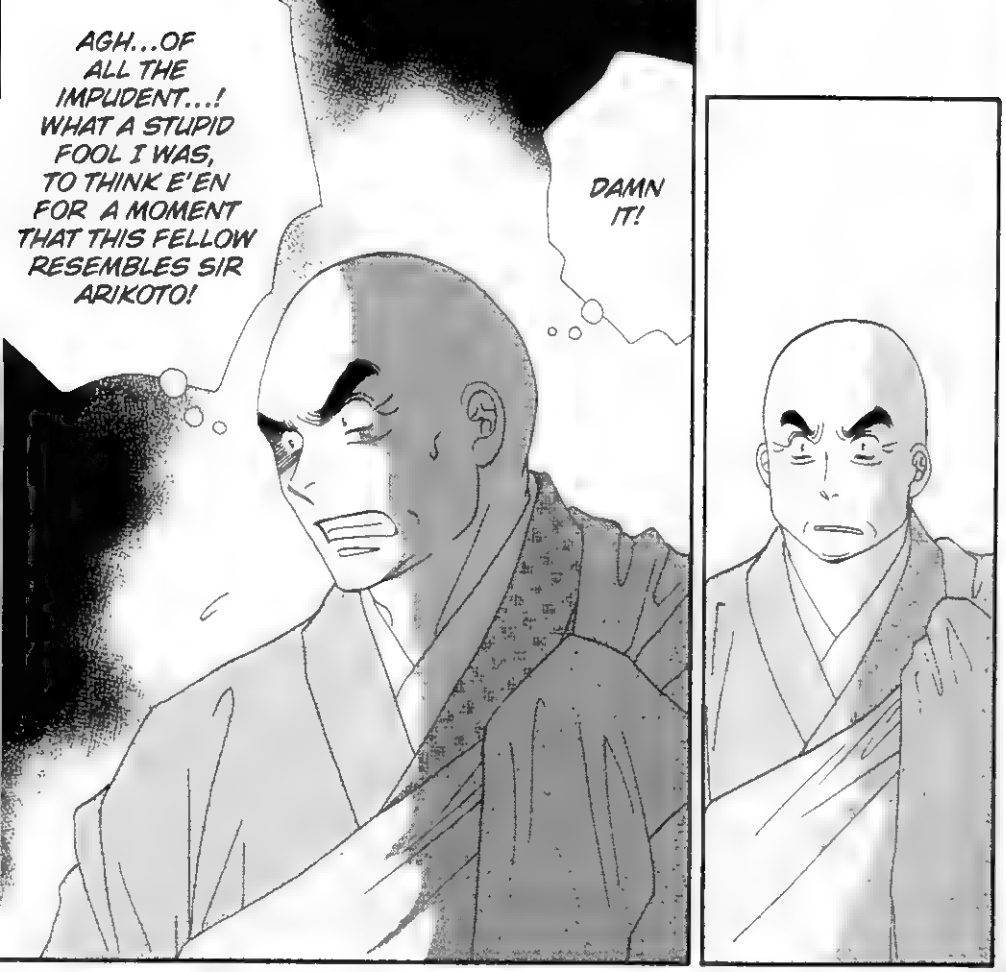

IN PARTICULAR, I WAS ASTONISHED BY THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THE PAVING STONES STRETCHING TO NARIHIRA BRIDGE FROM THE FRONT APPROACH TO YANAGISHIMA MYOKEN-DO.
WELL, WELL... IS THAT SO?
!

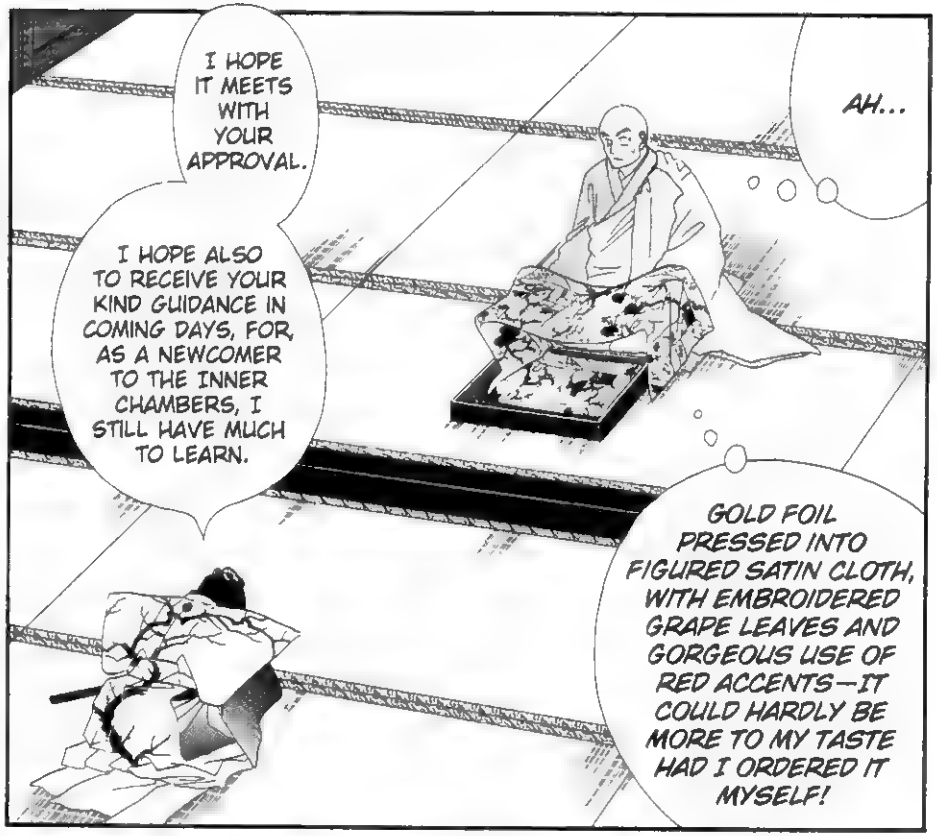
WE HAVE A GREAT MANY TEMPLES AND SHRINES IN KYOTO, BUT SCARCELY MAY WE SEE AN APPROACH AS GRAND AS THAT.
UPON INQUIRING, I DID LEARN THE APPROACH WAS FUNDED BY A GREAT DONATION FROM YOU, SIR KEISHO-IN...


NOW, IF IT SO PLEASE YOU, I HAVE BROUGHT A GIFT THAT I HOPE YOU WILL ACCEPT, PALTRY THOUGH IT BE.
IS... THAT SO?



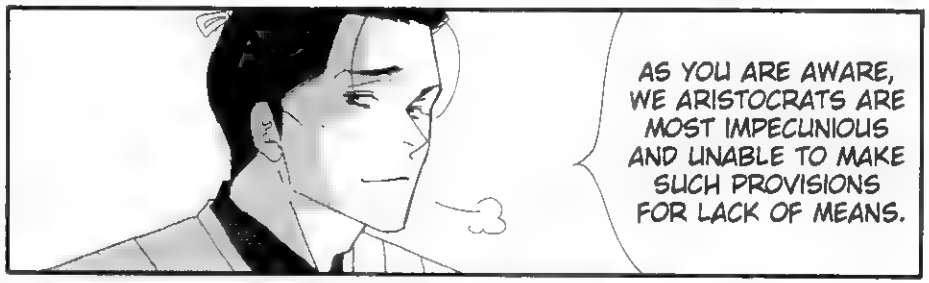

'TIS A BUDDHIST SURPLICE THAT WAS WOVEN IN THE NISHIJIN DISTRICT OF KYOTO.

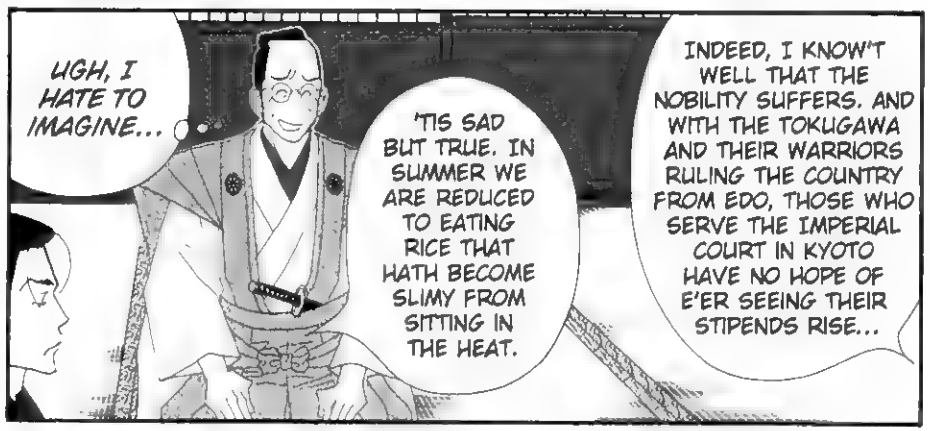

AGH...OF ALL THE IMPUDENT...! WHAT A STUPID FOOL I WAS, TO THINK E'EN FOR A MOMENT THAT THIS FELLOW RESEMBLES SIR ARIKOTO!
DAMN IT!

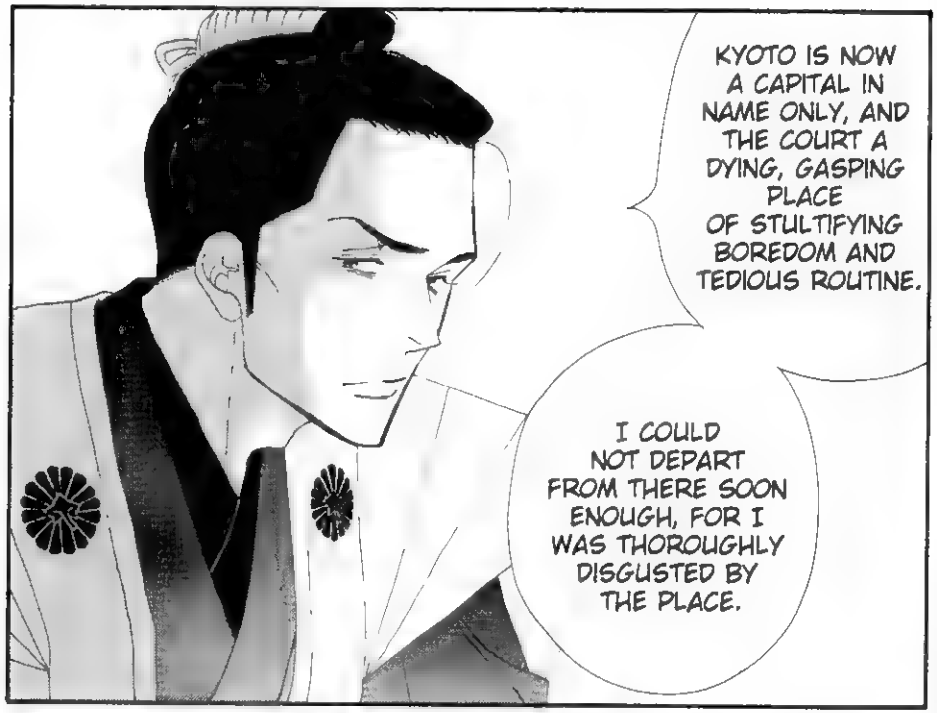

I HOPE IT MEETS WITH YOUR APPROVAL.
I HOPE ALSO TO RECEIVE YOUR KIND GUIDANCE IN COMING DAYS, FOR, AS A NEWCOMER TO THE INNER CHAMBERS, I STILL HAVE MUCH TO LEARN.
AH...
GOLD FOIL PRESSED INTO FIGURED SATIN CLOTH, WITH EMBROIDERED GRAPE LEAVES AND GORGEOUS USE OF RED ACCENTS—IT COULD HARDLY BE MORE TO MY TASTE HAD I ORDERED IT MYSELF!

Whap
Shhh
Shup
Uh

'TWAS ENTIRELY DUE TO YOUR FORETHOUGHT AND PREPARATION, MOST HONORED LORD CONSORT.
VERY GOOD! HOW THAT HATEFUL KEISHO-IN MUST HAVE GNASHED HIS TEETH AFTER THY DEPARTURE!
HEE HEE HEE!


AS YOU ARE AWARE, WE ARISTOCRATS ARE MOST IMPECUNIOUS AND UNABLE TO MAKE SUCH PROVISIONS FOR LACK OF MEANS.


UGH, I HATE TO IMAGINE...
'TIS SAD BUT TRUE. IN SUMMER WE ARE REDUCED TO EATING RICE THAT HATH BECOME SLIMY FROM SITTING IN THE HEAT.
INDEED, I KNOW'T WELL THAT THE NOBILITY SUFFERS. AND WITH THE TOKUGAWA AND THEIR WARRIORS RULING THE COUNTRY FROM EDO, THOSE WHO SERVE THE IMPERIAL COURT IN KYOTO HAVE NO HOPE OF E'ER SEEING THEIR STIPENDS RISE...


KYOTO IS NOW A CAPITAL IN NAME ONLY, AND THE COURT A DYING, GASPING PLACE OF STULTIFYING BOREDOM AND TEDIOUS ROUTINE.
I COULD NOT DEPART FROM THERE SOON ENOUGH, FOR I WAS THOROUGHLY DISGUSTED BY THE PLACE.

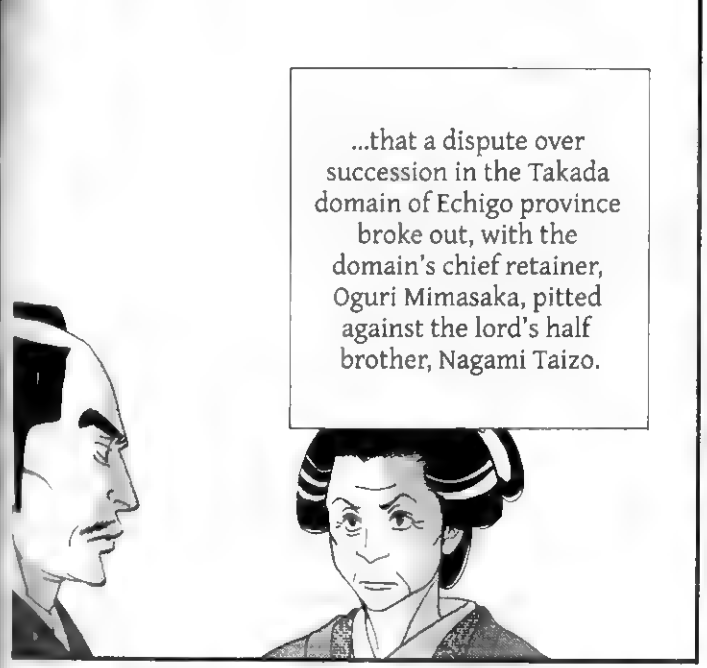
EVERYONE HERE IS FILLED WITH A FIERY AMBITION, WHICH DOTH GIVE THIS PLACE A PULSATING VIGOR.
TO THESE INNER CHAMBERS OF EDO CASTLE, ON THE OTHER HAND, I HAVE TAKEN AN INSTANT LIKING.

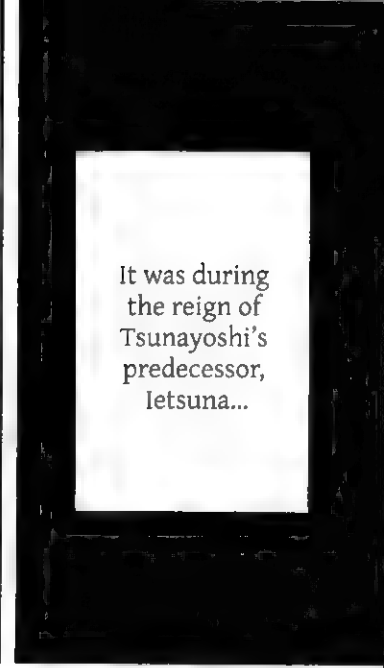
AND THE RICE HERE IS ALWAYS FRESHLY COOKED AND SWEET OF TASTE, WITH NO SLIMY COATING UPON IT!

OGURI MIMASAKA, CHIEF RETAINER OF THE TAKADA DOMAIN...
I AM DISSATISFIED WITH THE DECISION MADE IN YOUR CASE DURING LORD IETSUNA'S RULE.
DRAW THEE NEAR.

AND THOU, MIMASAKA? DOST THOU NOT FIND IT DISGRACE-FUL?
...BUT TO MY MIND, THE RETAINERS OF A CLAN OUGHT NOT TO BE WRANGLING WITH EACH OTHER OVER INHERITANCE IN THE FIRST PLACE. INDEED, I FIND IT REPREHENSIBLE.
THE PREVIOUS COURT FOUND ENTIRELY IN THY FAVOR IN THIS CASE...

MY LORD!


...that a dispute over succession in the Takada domain of Echigo province broke out, with the domain's chief retainer, Oguri Mimasaka, pitted against the lord's half brother, Nagami Taizo.


It was during the reign of Tsunayoshi's predecessor, Ietsuna...

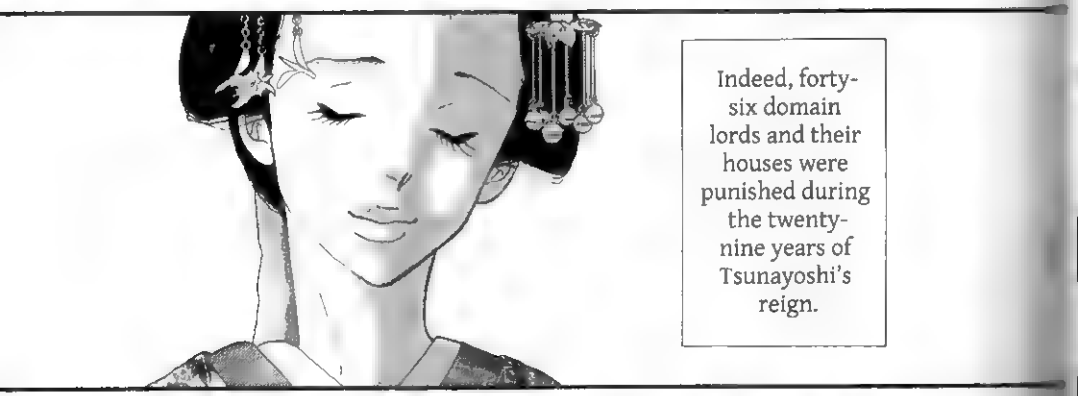
I HAVE SUMMONED ALL OF YOU, RETAINERS OF THE TAKADA DOMAIN AND VARIOUS LORDS, TO EDO CASTLE TODAY FOR ONE REASON, AND NO OTHER.
Although the case had already been settled in favor of Oguri Mimasaka, Tsunayoshi chose to retry it herself.

AS FOR THE LORD OF THE TAKADA DOMAIN, MATSUDAIRA MITSUNAGA...
...THOU HAST FAILED IN THY OBLIGATION TO KEEP THY HOUSE IN ORDER. FOR THAT, I SHALL CONFISCATE THY DOMAIN, WHICH DOTH YEILD 250,000 KOKU OF RICE, AND SEND THEE INTO THE CARE OF MATSUDAIRA SADANAO OF THE MATSUYAMA DOMAIN IN IYO PROVINCE.
BUT...!!
YOU MAY BE THE GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER OF OUR MOST REVERED ANCESTOR, LORD IEYASU, BUT JUSTICE IS JUSTICE, AND MUST BE DONE...

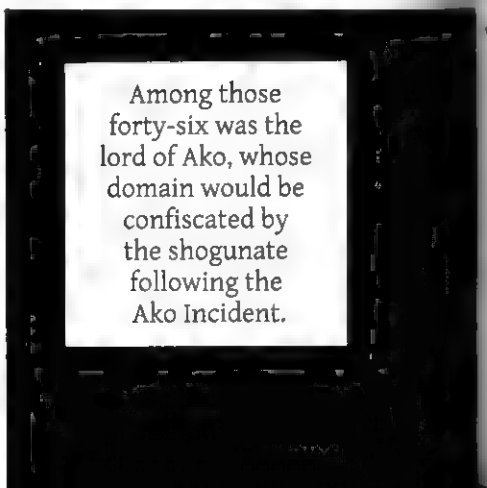
I SENTENCE THEE AND THY SON DAIROKU TO DEATH.
OGURI MIMA-SAKA.
WELL?

!!

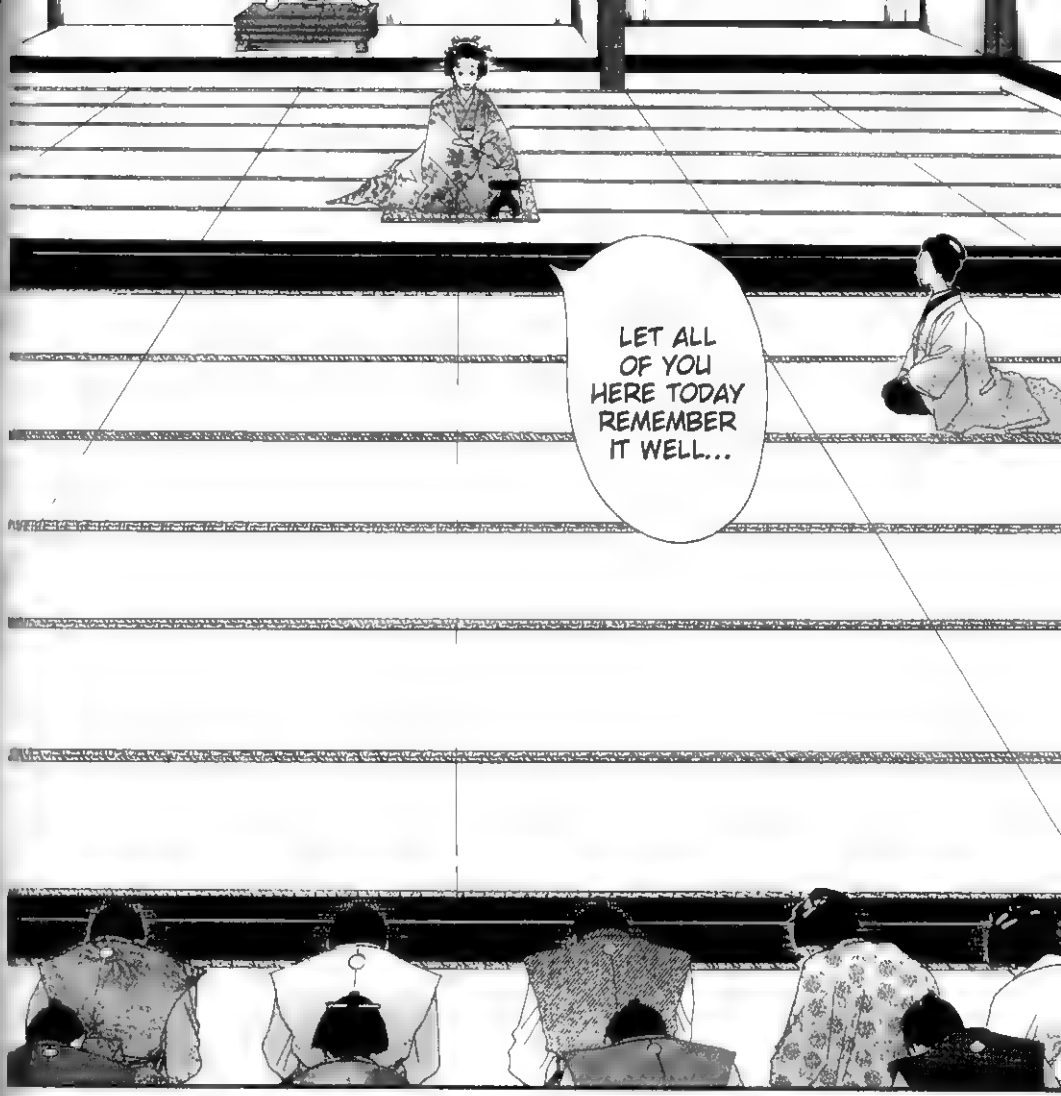
IF OGURI IS TO DIE, THEN THOU, NAGAMI TAIZO, HER OPPONENT, SHALL BE EXILED TO THE ISLAND OF HACHIJO-JIMA.
!
BUT THERE IS NO VICTOR IN A DISPUTE SUCH AS THIS.



Indeed, forty-six domain lords and their houses were punished during the twenty-nine years of Tsunayoshi's reign.



Among those forty-six was the lord of Ako, whose domain would be confiscated by the shogunate following the Ako Incident.



OF THE MANY SCHOOLS THEN ACTIVE, MENCIUS DID FOCUS ON TWO OPPOSING PHILOSOPHIES— THAT OF MOZI, AND THAT OF YANG ZHU.
MENCIUS LIVED DURING THE WARRING STATES PERIOD, WHEN MANY SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT WERE ACTIVE. INDEED, IT WAS THE TIME KNOWN AS THE HUNDRED SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT, WITH MUCH ROBUST DEBATE AND ARGUMENT.

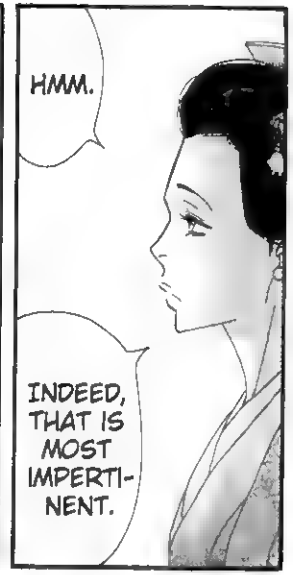
MOZI ARGUED FOR THE CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL LOVE, WHICH STOOD IN CONTRAST TO THE FILIAL PIETY STRESSED BY CONFUCIUS, AND—

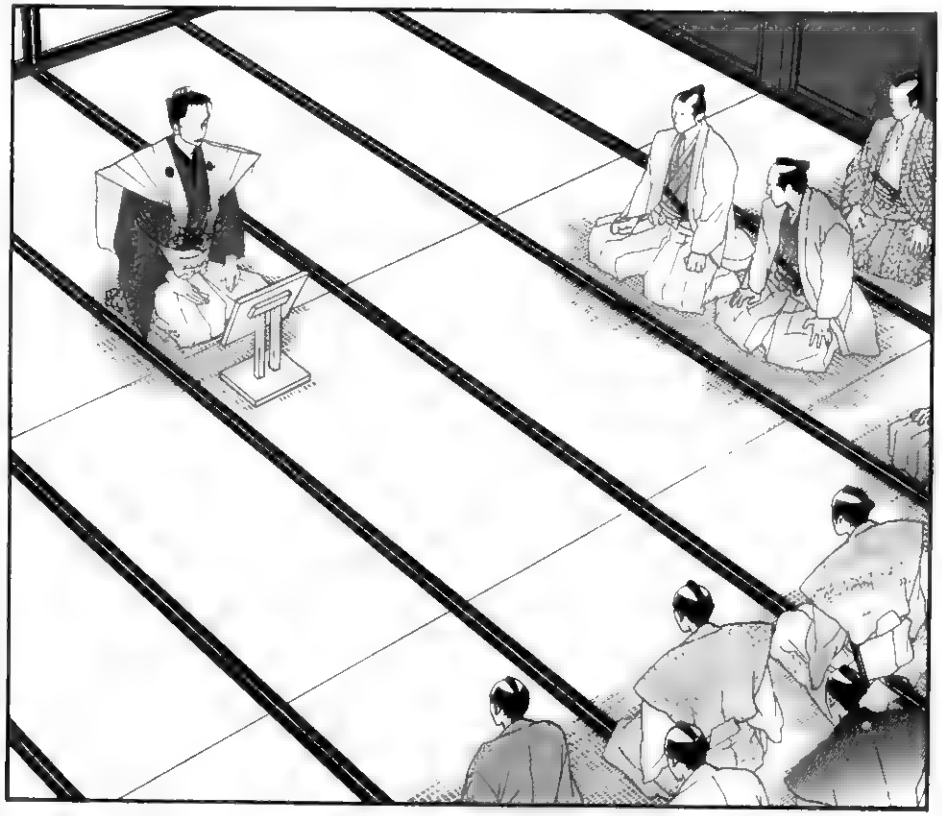
BY YOUR LEAVE!

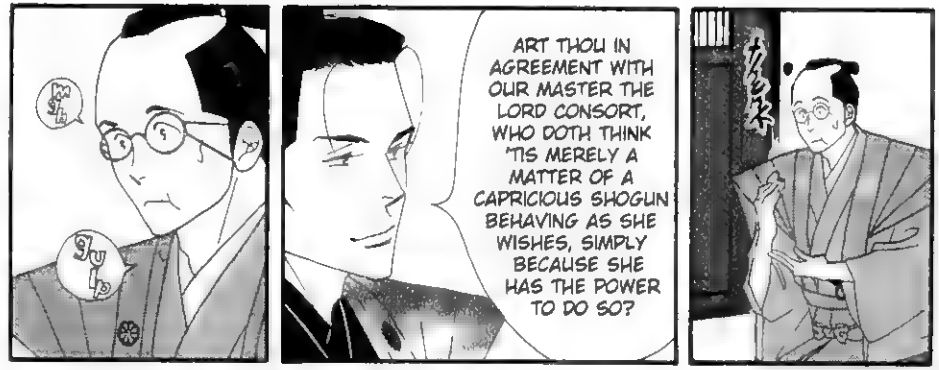
AYE. GOOD, GOOD. CARRY ON, CARRY ON.
EGADS! IT'S OUR LIEGE!!

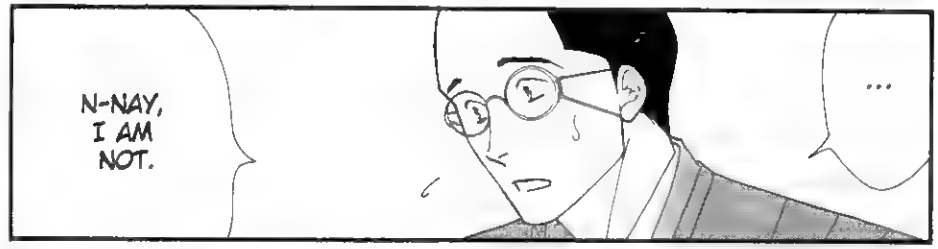
STUPID FOOL!

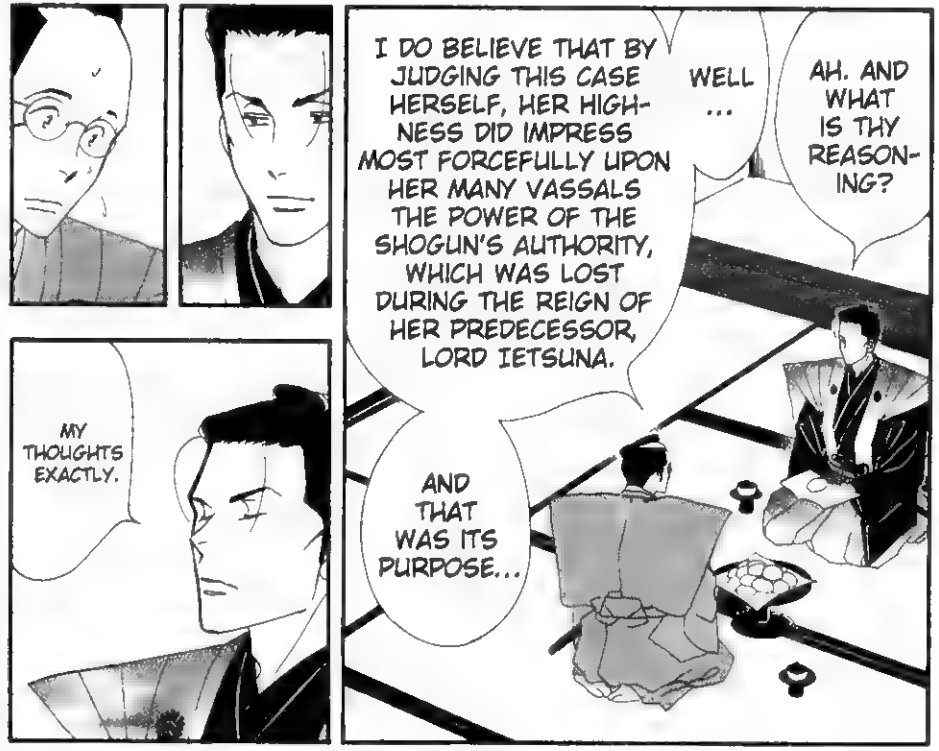
I SHALL HAVE TO MEET WITH THIS FELLOW MYSELF AND REBUKE HIM FOR THIS LAPSE OF MANNERS.
OOPS!

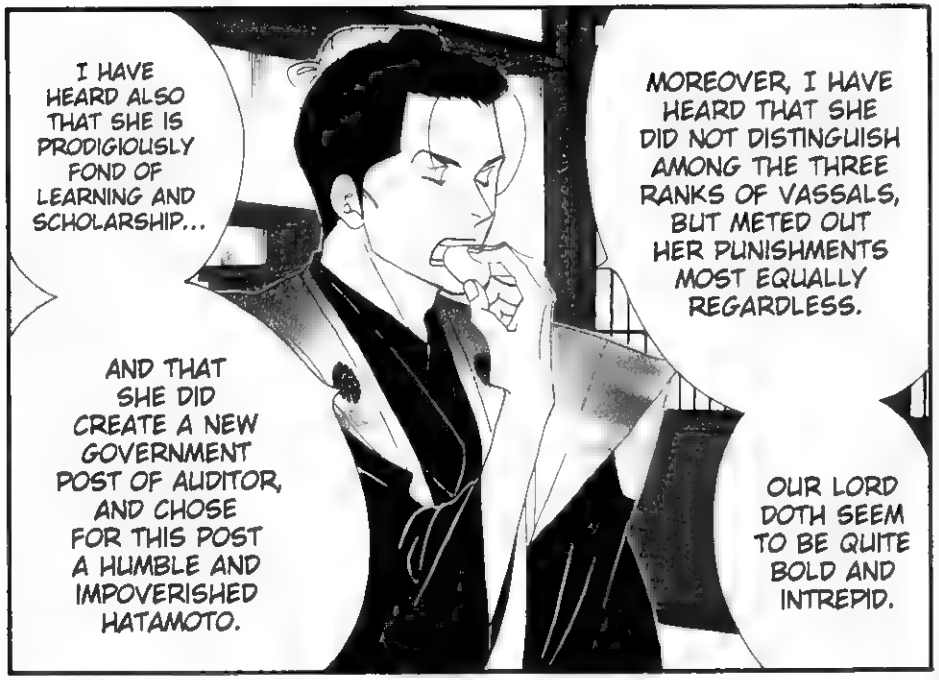

HMM.
INDEED, THAT IS MOST IMPERTI-NENT.

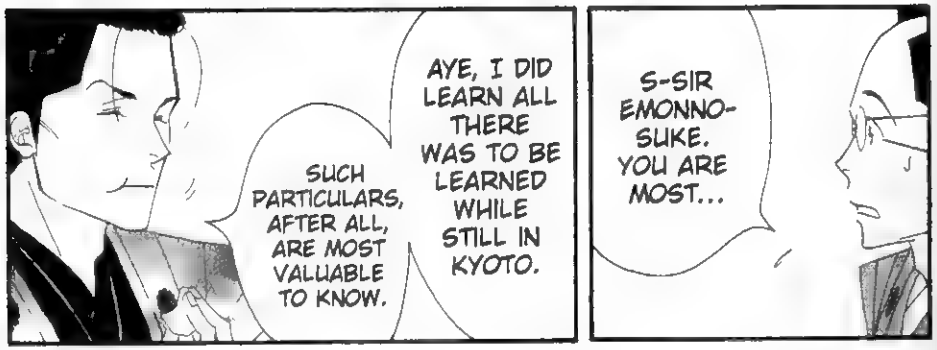


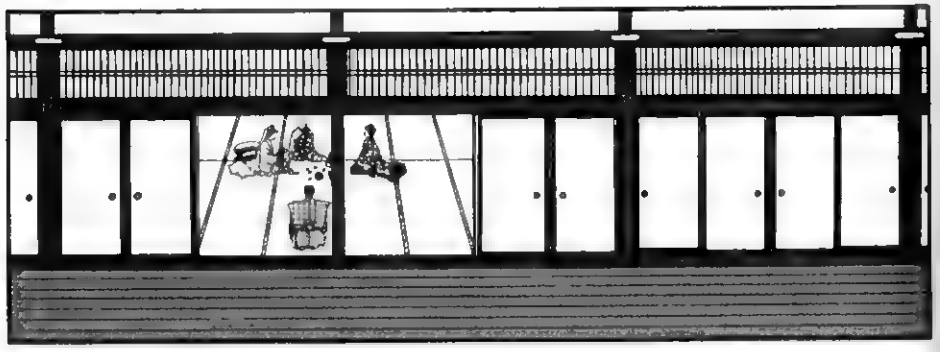

ART THOU IN AGREEMENT WITH OUR MASTER THE LORD CONSORT, WHO DOTH THINK 'TIS MERELY A MATTER OF A CAPRICIOUS SHOGUN BEHAVING AS SHE WISHES, SIMPLY BECAUSE SHE HAS THE POWER TO DO SO?


N-NAY, I AM NOT.
...


I DO BELIEVE THAT BY JUDGING THIS CASE HERSELF, HER HIGHNESS DID IMPRESS MOST FORCEFULLY UPON HER MANY VASSALS THE POWER OF THE SHOGUN'S AUTHORITY, WHICH WAS LOST DURING THE REIGN OF HER PREDECESSOR, LORD IETSUNA.
WELL ...
AH. AND WHAT IS THY REASONING?
MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY.
AND THAT WAS ITS PURPOSE...

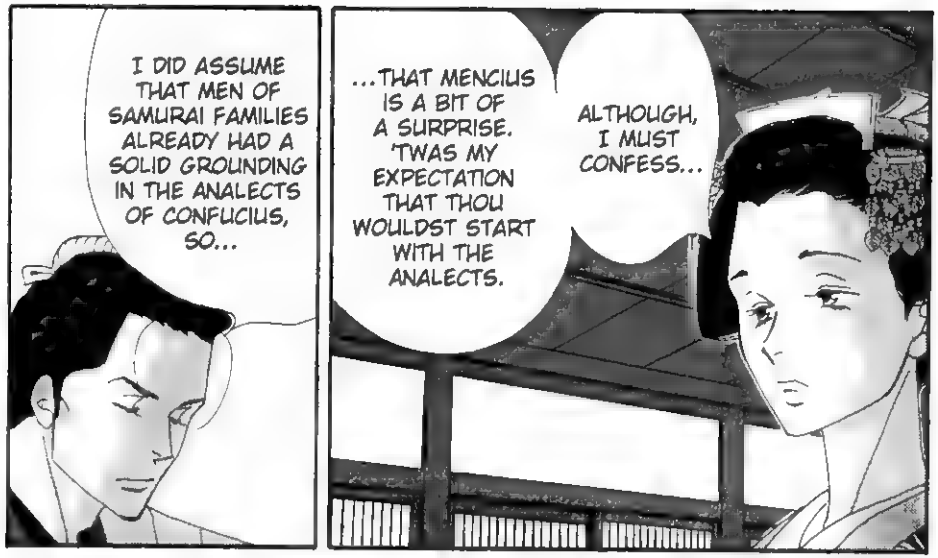

I HAVE HEARD ALSO THAT SHE IS PRODIGIOUSLY FOND OF LEARNING AND SCHOLARSHIP...
MOREOVER, I HAVE HEARD THAT SHE DID NOT DISTINGUISH AMONG THE THREE RANKS OF VASSALS, BUT METED OUT HER PUNISHMENTS MOST EQUALLY REGARDLESS.
AND THAT SHE DID CREATE A NEW GOVERNMENT POST OF AUDITOR, AND CHOSE FOR THIS POST A HUMBLE AND IMPOVERISHED HATAMOTO.
OUR LORD DOTH SEEM TO BE QUITE BOLD AND INTREPID.

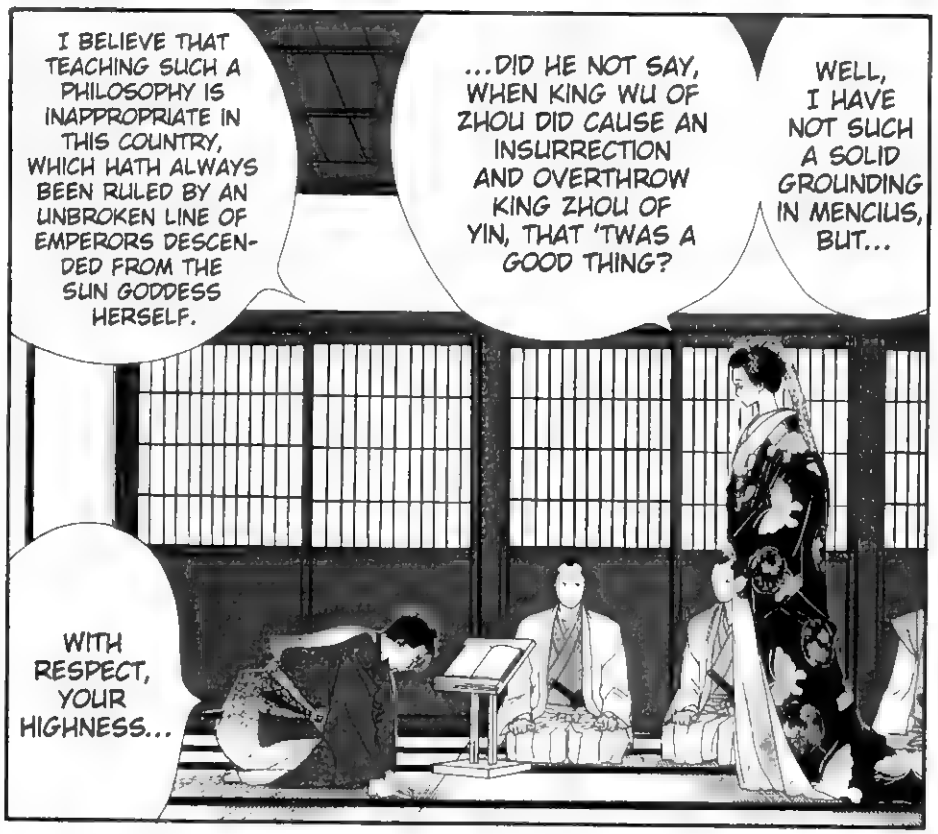

SUCH PARTICULARS, AFTER ALL, ARE MOST VALUABLE TO KNOW.
AYE, I DID LEARN ALL THERE WAS TO BE LEARNED WHILE STILL IN KYOTO.
S-SIR EMONNO-SUKE. YOU ARE MOST...

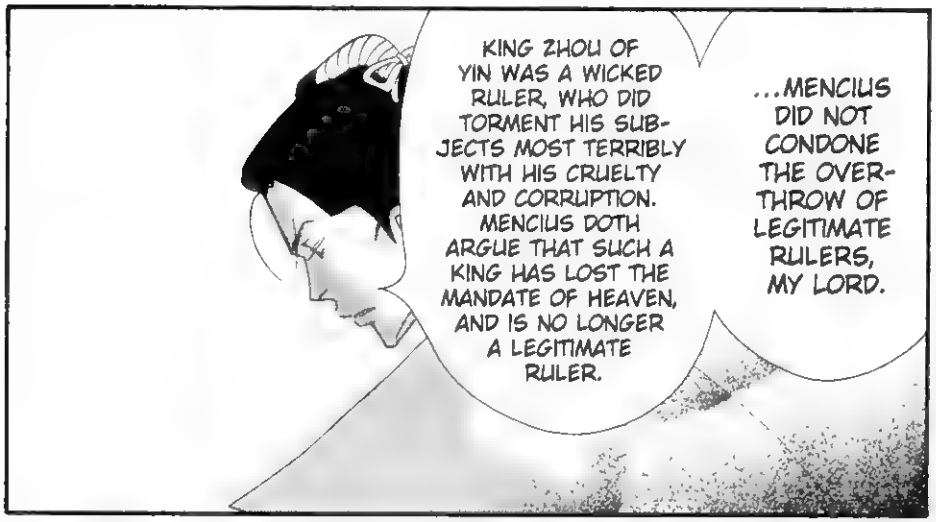


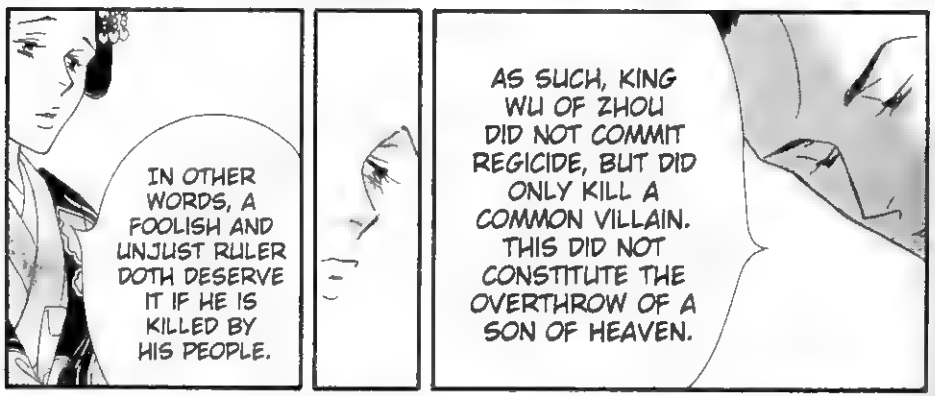
OHH, DEAR MATSU, HOW HEAVY THOU HAST BECOME!
HONORED MOTHERRR!
I DECLARE SHE DOTH BECOME MORE LOVELY WITH EVERY PASSING DAY!
LADY MATSU DOTH THRIVE MOST WELL, AND IS GROWING VERY FAST INDEED.
AH, AYE, SWEET MATSU, THY MOTHER DID WISH TO BE WITH THEE TOO!
'TIS FOR THE SAKE OF THEE, MATSU, THAT THY MOTHER CAN PUT SUCH EFFORT INTO GOVERNMENT. 'TIS THE THOUGHT OF SEEING THEE!
YOSHIYASU. I NE'ER DID KNOW THAT ONE'S CHILD COULD FILL ONE WITH SO MUCH LOVE.

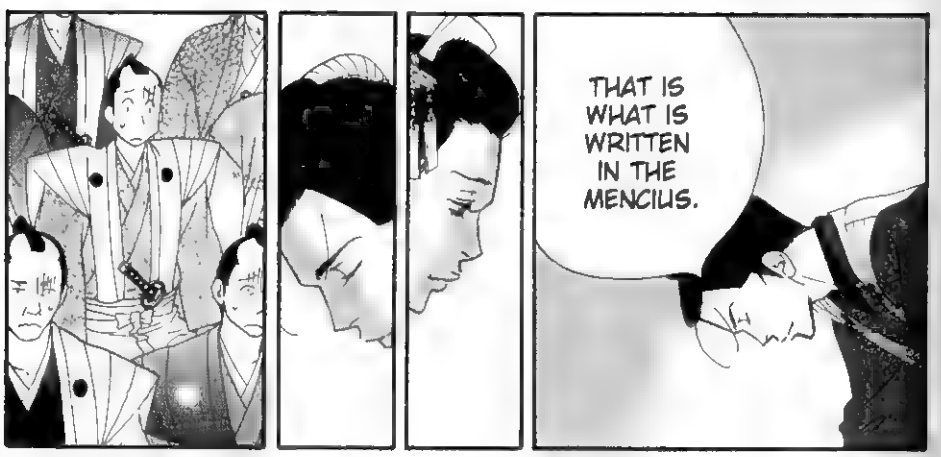
ULP!
AH. THERE IS A NEW MAN COME TO THE INNER CHAMBERS FROM KYOTO, AN EMONNO-SUKE.
HE IS A KNAVE, THAT ONE!!
I UNDER-STAND YOU HAVE ALREADY MET HIM, HONORED FATHER.
Y-YOUR HIGH-NESS!
I HEAR HE IS GATHERING THE MEN OF THE INNER CHAMBERS ABOUT HIM OF LATE FOR LECTURES ON THE TEACHINGS OF CON-FUCIUS. WHAT IS HIS AIM, TO EMULATE SIR ARIKOTO...?
A SLY FOX, ALTOGETHER TOO SMOOTH AND POLISHED TO BE TRUSTED. HE DID BEHAVE MOST COMMEN-DABLY, BUT I LIKE HIM NOT.
I AM, AT THE VERY LEAST, THE FATHER OF THE TOKUGAWA HEIR! IF THIS BE TO SLIGHT ME FOR MY HUMBLE BIRTH, 'TIS INSOLENT IN THE EXTREME!
TH-THIS EMONNOSUKE OF WHOM YOU DO SPEAK HATH NOT ONCE COME TO MY CHAMBERS TO INTRODUCE HIMSELF!


I DID ASSUME THAT MEN OF SAMURAI FAMILIES ALREADY HAD A SOLID GROUNDING IN THE ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS, SO...
...THAT MENCIUS IS A BIT OF A SURPRISE. 'TWAS MY EXPECTATION THAT THOU WOULDST START WITH THE ANALECTS.
ALTHOUGH, I MUST CONFESS...


I BELIEVE THAT TEACHING SUCH A PHILOSOPHY IS INAPPROPRIATE IN THIS COUNTRY, WHICH HATH ALWAYS BEEN RULED BY AN UNBROKEN LINE OF EMPERORS DESCENDED FROM THE SUN GODDESS HERSELF.
...DID HE NOT SAY, WHEN KING WU OF ZHOU DID CAUSE AN INSURRECTION AND OVERTHROW KING ZHOU OF YIN, THAT 'TWAS A GOOD THING?
WELL, I HAVE NOT SUCH A SOLID GROUNDING IN MENCIUS, BUT...
WITH RESPECT, YOUR HIGHNESS...

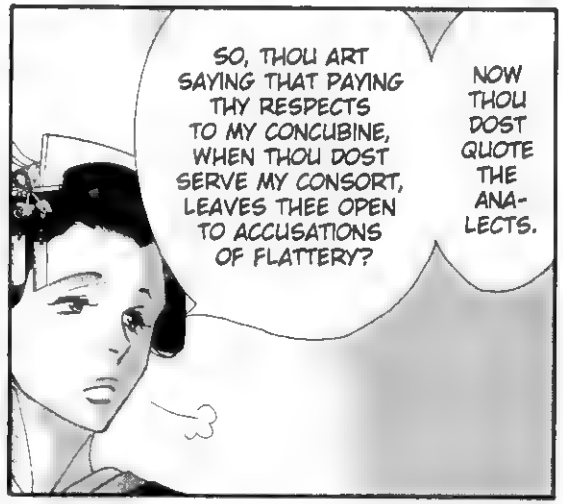

KING ZHOU OF YIN WAS A WICKED RULER, WHO DID TORMENT HIS SUBJECTS MOST TERRIBLY WITH HIS CRUELTY AND CORRUPTION. MENCIUS DOTH ARGUE THAT SUCH A KING HAS LOST THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN, AND IS NO LONGER A LEGITIMATE RULER.
...MENCIUS DID NOT CONDONE THE OVERTHROW OF LEGITIMATE RULERS, MY LORD.


IN OTHER WORDS, A FOOLISH AND UNJUST RULER DOTH DESERVE IT IF HE IS KILLED BY HIS PEOPLE.
AS SUCH, KING WU OF ZHOU DID NOT COMMIT REGICIDE, BUT DID ONLY KILL A COMMON VILLAIN. THIS DID NOT CONSTITUTE THE OVERTHROW OF A SON OF HEAVEN.

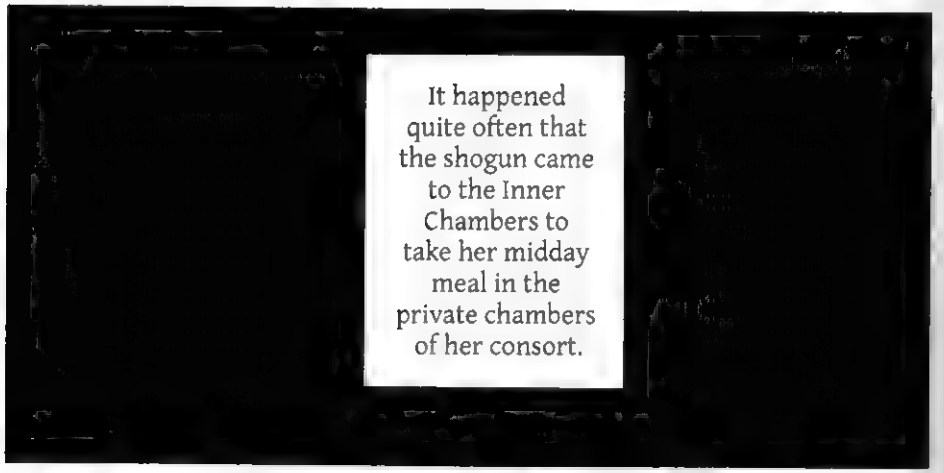

THAT IS WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE MENCIUS.

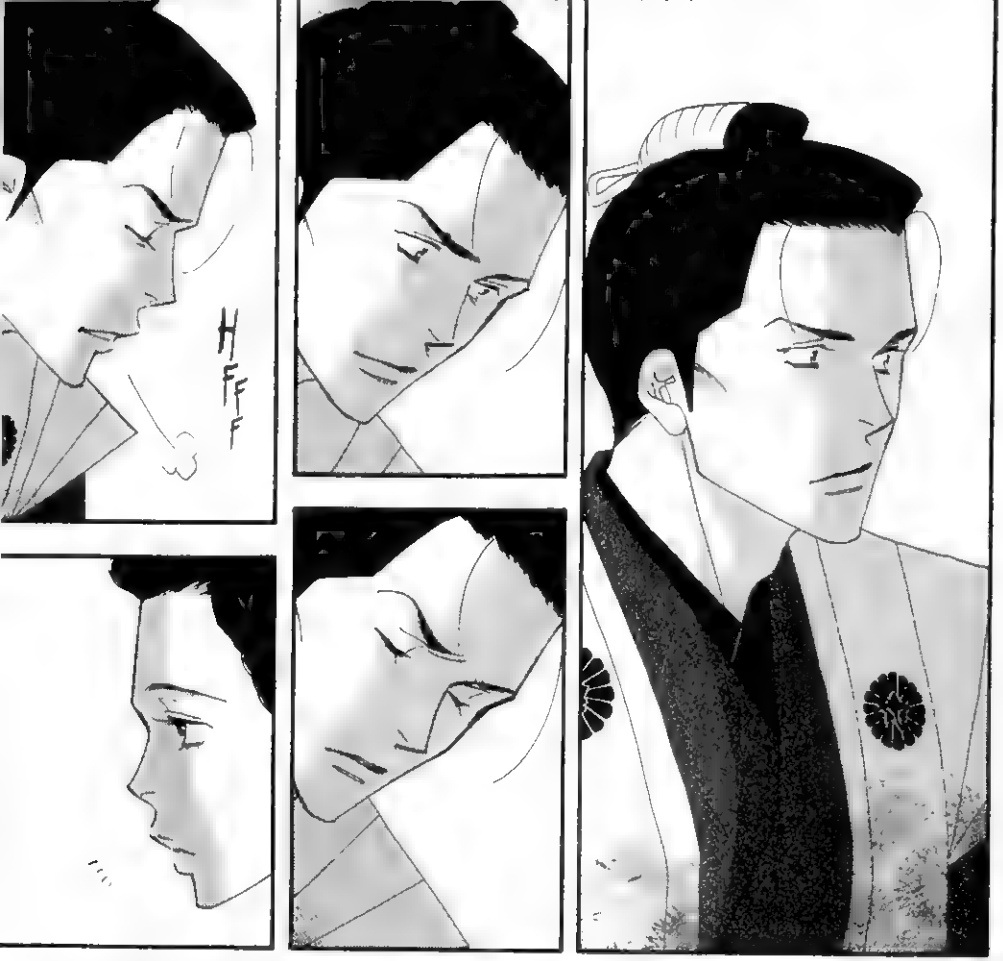
IF I, IN THIS CAPACITY, SHOULD SEEK TO MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF SIR O-DEN, IT WOULD SEEM TO BE NOTHING OTHER THAN "THE FULL OBSERVANCE OF THE RULES OF PROPRIETY IN SERVING ONE'S PRINCE" BEING "ACCOUNTED BY PEOPLE TO BE FLATTERY."
"MINISTERS SHOULD SERVE THEIR PRINCE WITH LOYALTY"... AND I AM A CHAMBERLAIN TO NONE OTHER THAN YOUR CONSORT, PRINCE NOBUHIRA.
OH, AYE. ANOTHER THING. I HAVE HEARD THAT THOU HAST NOT ONCE BEEN TO PAY THY RESPECTS TO MY CONCUBINE DENBE SINCE THY ARRIVAL HERE IN THE INNER CHAMBERS. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?

VERILY SO.
YOUR HIGHNESS IS MOST LEARNED.


SO, THOU ART SAYING THAT PAYING THY RESPECTS TO MY CONCUBINE, WHEN THOU DOST SERVE MY CONSORT, LEAVES THEE OPEN TO ACCUSATIONS OF FLATTERY?
NOW THOU DOST QUOTE THE ANALECTS.

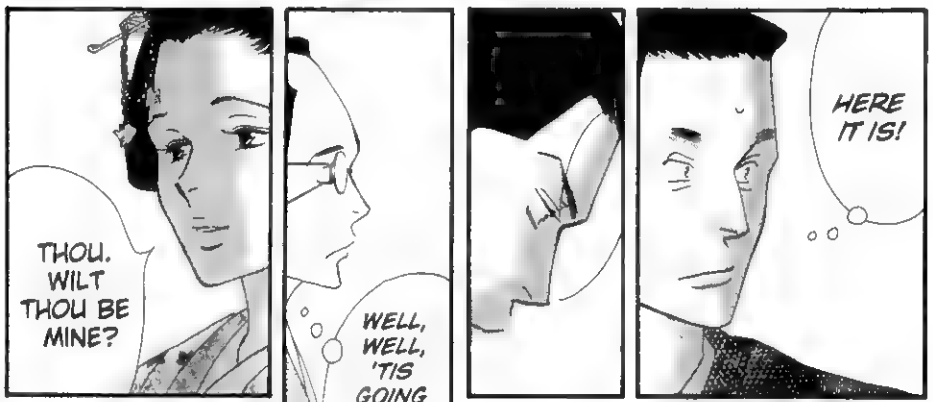
'TWAS TRUE. THOU ART A SLY FOX INDEED.

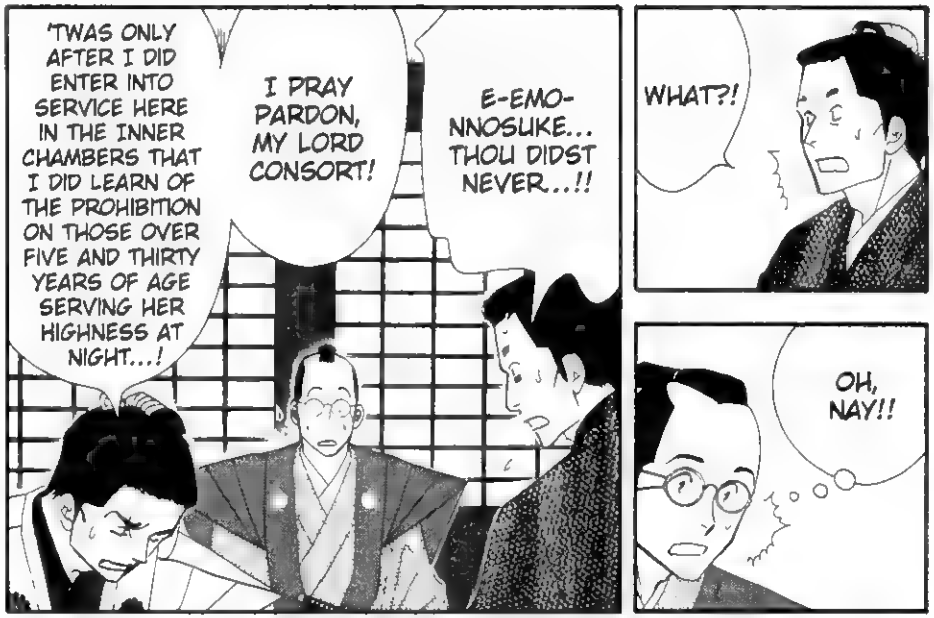

It happened quite often that the shogun came to the Inner Chambers to take her midday meal in the private chambers of her consort.


HFFF

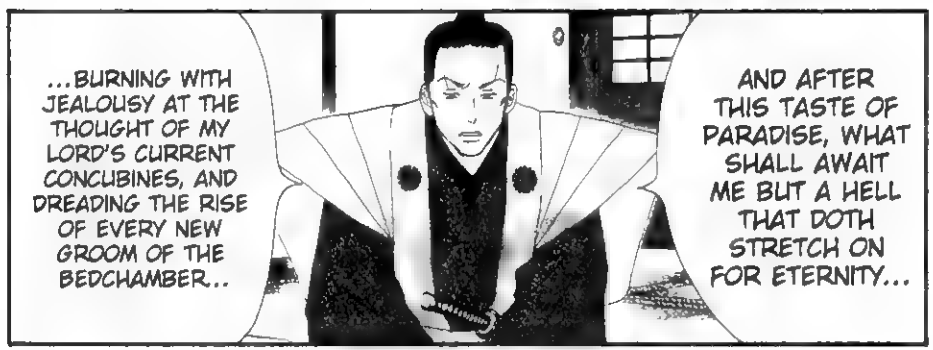
I WISH YOU TO KNOW THAT NEXT YEAR I SHALL BE FIVE AND THIRTY YEARS OF AGE.
YOUR HIGH-NESS...

NOW, SIR NOBUHIRA. PRAY WOULD YOU GIVE ME THIS ATTENDANT OF YOURS?

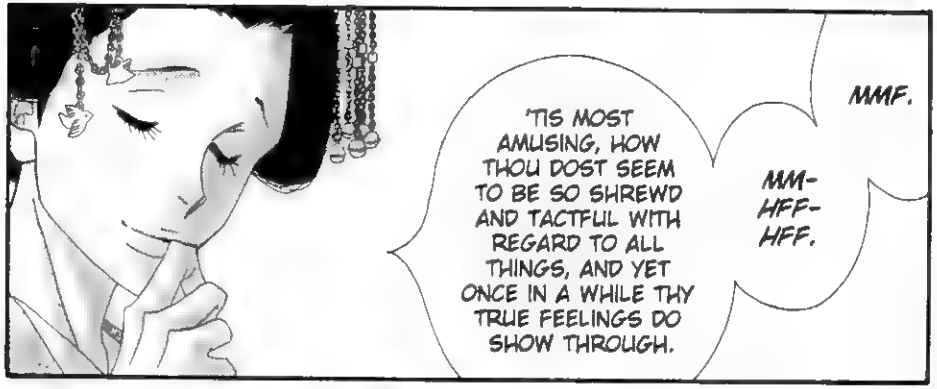

THOU. WILT THOU BE MINE?
WELL, WELL, 'TIS GOING ACCOR-DING TO PLAN.
HERE IT IS!


'TWAS ONLY AFTER I DID ENTER INTO SERVICE HERE IN THE INNER CHAMBERS THAT I DID LEARN OF THE PROHIBITION ON THOSE OVER FIVE AND THIRTY YEARS OF AGE SERVING HER HIGHNESS AT NIGHT...!
I PRAY PARDON, MY LORD CONSORT!
E-EMO-NNOSUKE... THOU DIDST NEVER...!!
WHAT?!
OH, NAY!!

AND THEREFORE, EVEN IF YOUR HIGHNESS SHOULD BE SO KIND AS TO FAVOR ME THUS, 'TWILL BE NO MORE THAN A MERE INTERLUDE...
THOU SHALT BE FIVE AND THIRTY NEXT YEAR...


...BURNING WITH JEALOUSY AT THE THOUGHT OF MY LORD'S CURRENT CONCUBINES, AND DREADING THE RISE OF EVERY NEW GROOM OF THE BEDCHAMBER...
AND AFTER THIS TASTE OF PARADISE, WHAT SHALL AWAIT ME BUT A HELL THAT DOTH STRETCH ON FOR ETERNITY...

I HAVE ALL MY LIFE SUFFERED FROM PRIDE AND AN INABILITY TO ACCEPT DEFEAT—AND THIS IS A FATE I SIMPLY CANNOT BEAR!


'TIS MOST AMUSING, HOW THOU DOST SEEM TO BE SO SHREWD AND TACTFUL WITH REGARD TO ALL THINGS, AND YET ONCE IN A WHILE THY TRUE FEELINGS DO SHOW THROUGH.
MMF.
MM-HFF-HFF.

IF THOU CANNOT BEAR TO BE MY CONCUBINE, THEN WHAT WOULDST THOU BE INSTEAD? TELL ME.
I LIKE THEE!

BOW YE DOWN FOR THE ENTRANCE OF OUR LIEGE!!

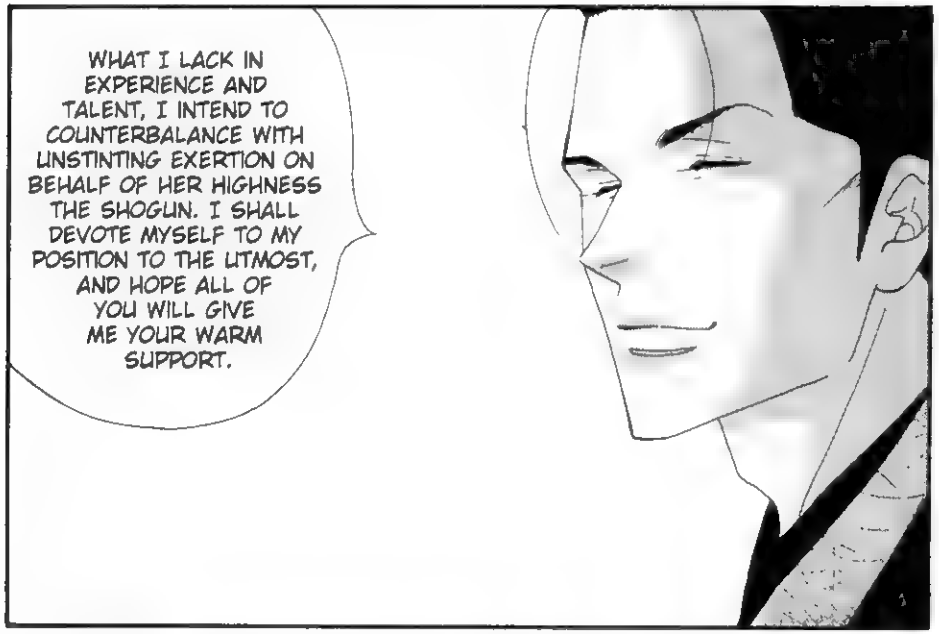
EMONNO-SUKE! THIS IS NOT WHAT WE AGREED!
BY YOUR LEAVE...

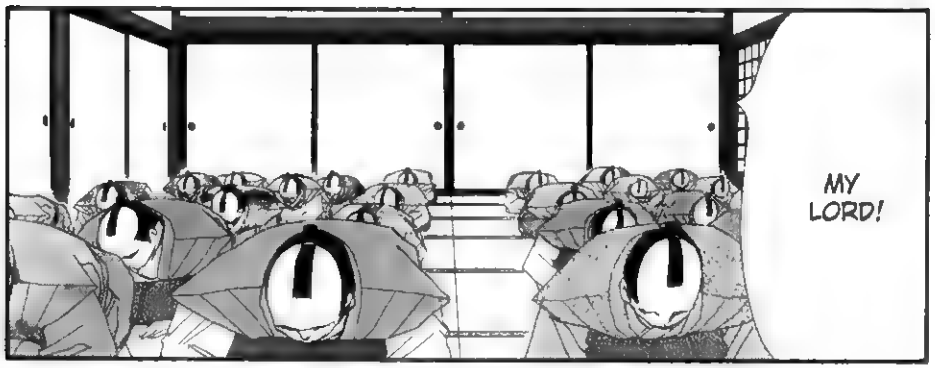
WITH RESPECT, MY LORD CONSORT, I DO BELIEVE I CAN SERVE YOU BETTER THIS WAY.
WHAT WAS ALL THAT, THAT THOU DIDST JUST SPOUT?! I DID CALL THEE FROM KYOTO FOR ONE REASON ALONE, AND THAT WAS TO SERVE HER HIGHNESS IN THE BED-CHAMBER...

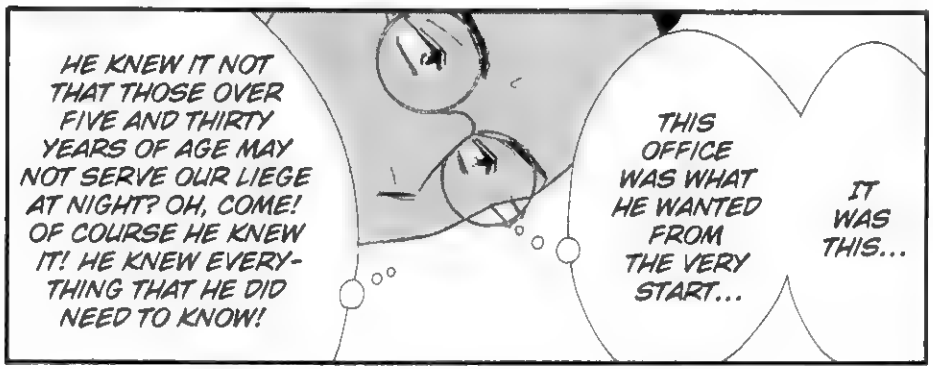
FOR ME TO BECOME OUR LORD'S CONCUBINE WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO BETRAYAL OF YOUR EXCELLENCY, AND 'TWAS INTOLERABLE TO ME.
AND WHAT HUSBAND COULD FEEL ANYTHING BUT DISTRESS AT HAVING TO SHARE HIS WIFE WITH ANOTHER MAN, REGARDLESS OF THE CIR-CUMSTANCES?

HER HIGHNESS IS A MOST NOBLE AND DIGNIFIED LADY. IT DOTH SEEM THIS MINCING KYOTO FOP, WITH ALL HIS AIRS, WAS NOT TO HER TASTE.
IT SERVES HIM RIGHT.
HMPH, IT DOTH APPEAR TOKUKO DID NOT LAY HANDS UPON THAT FELLOW EMONNOSUKE, AFTER ALL.

MY LORD!
I DID SUMMON YOU ALL HERE TODAY, FOR I HAVE AN ANNOUNCE-MENT TO MAKE.
EMONNO-SUKE. FORWARD.
I HAVE DECIDED TO APPOINT THIS EMONNOSUKE HERE THE NEXT SENIOR CHAMBERLAIN OF THE INNER CHAMBERS.

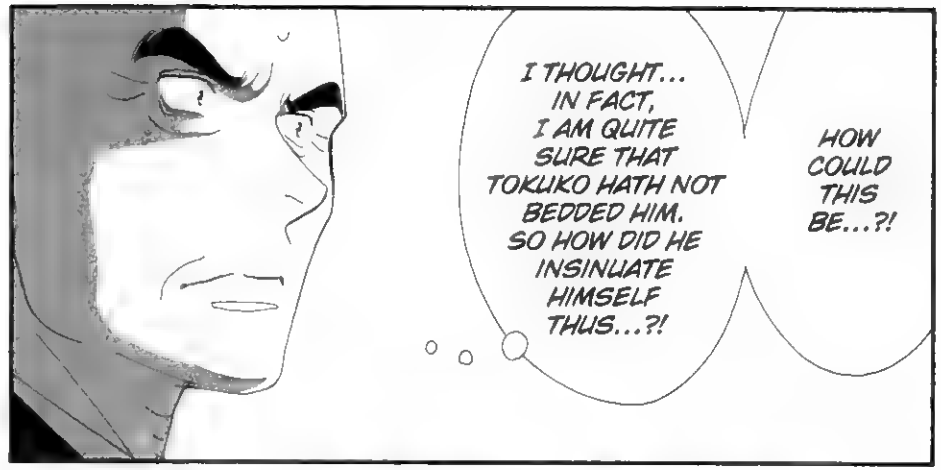

WHAT I LACK IN EXPERIENCE AND TALENT, I INTEND TO COUNTERBALANCE WITH UNSTINTING EXERTION ON BEHALF OF HER HIGHNESS THE SHOGUN. I SHALL DEVOTE MYSELF TO MY POSITION TO THE UTMOST, AND HOPE ALL OF YOU WILL GIVE ME YOUR WARM SUPPORT.

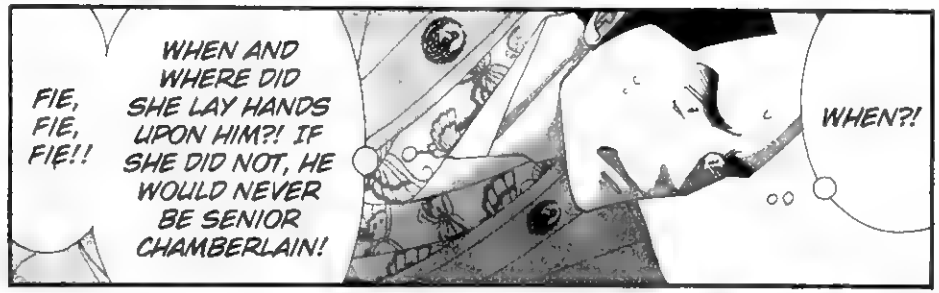

MY LORD!

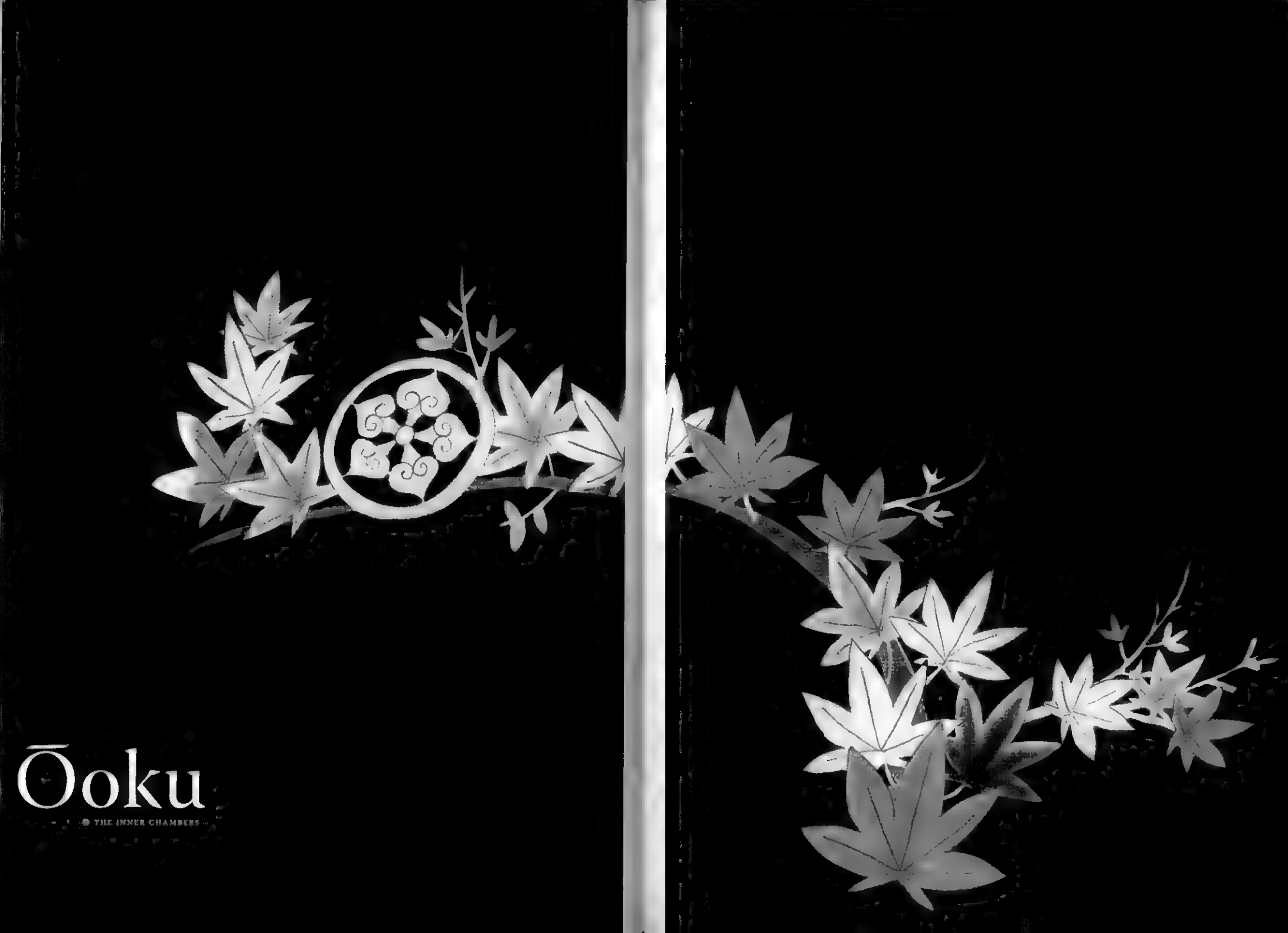

HE KNEW IT NOT THAT THOSE OVER FIVE AND THIRTY YEARS OF AGE MAY NOT SERVE OUR LIEGE AT NIGHT? OH, COME! OF COURSE HE KNEW IT! HE KNEW EVERY-THING THAT HE DID NEED TO KNOW!
THIS OFFICE WAS WHAT HE WANTED FROM THE VERY START...
IT WAS THIS...

REMEMBER IT WELL, THAT HENCEFORTH ANY AND ALL MATTERS INSIDE THESE INNER CHAMBERS SHALL BE REFERRED TO ME.
I AM EMONNOSUKE, AND I HAVE BEEN GRANTED THE GREAT HONOR OF SERVING IN THE CAPACITY OF SENIOR CHAMBERLAIN FROM THIS DAY FORWARD.

In this way, Emonnosuke obtained the post of Senior Chamberlain of the Inner Chambers, which had stood vacant for decades since the retirement of Sir Arikoto.






Ōoku
THE INNER CHAMBERS

Page 36, panel 1 · Official Tokugawa History

An official history of the Tokugawa family giving a daily record of events. The Japanese title is *Tokugawa Jikki*, which literally means "The True Tokugawa Record."

Page 37, panel 7 · Followed Our Lord to the Grave

Junshi was a practice where close vassals followed their master into death either through suicide or forced suicide. The historical Hotta did indeed commit suicide after the death of Iemitsu, with whom he was known to have had a homosexual relationship.

Page 44, panel 4 · Sugoroku

A Japanese board game.

Page 47, panel 5 · Night-crawling

Yobai literally means "night crawling," and was a practice wherein men snuck into the homes of women they fancied to spend the night with them before marriage.

Page 63, panel 1 · Koishikawa

Located in the Bunkyo area of Tokyo.

Page 67, panel 3 · Sunpu

The present-day city of Shizuoka. Its castle is closely associated with Tokugawa Ieyasu.

Page 68, panel 1 · Kunōzan

The Kunōzan Tosho-gu Shrine, near Shizuoka City, is where the historical Tokugawa Ieyasu was first buried.

Page 75, panel 2 · Dengaku Yaki

Skewered tofu, *konnyaku* (a gelatinous substance made from the konnyaku plant), fish, eggplant, daikon radish, or other ingredients that have been covered in sweet miso paste and grilled.

Page 80, panel 4 · Tora-no-mon

Literally the "Tiger Gate." At the time this manga takes place it was an actual gate at the south end of Edo Castle. The gate was removed in the late 19th century, and today Toranomon is just a place name.

Page 81, panel 3 · O-Bon

The Japanese celebration to honor the dead. It is celebrated in the summer, although the exact day differs by region.

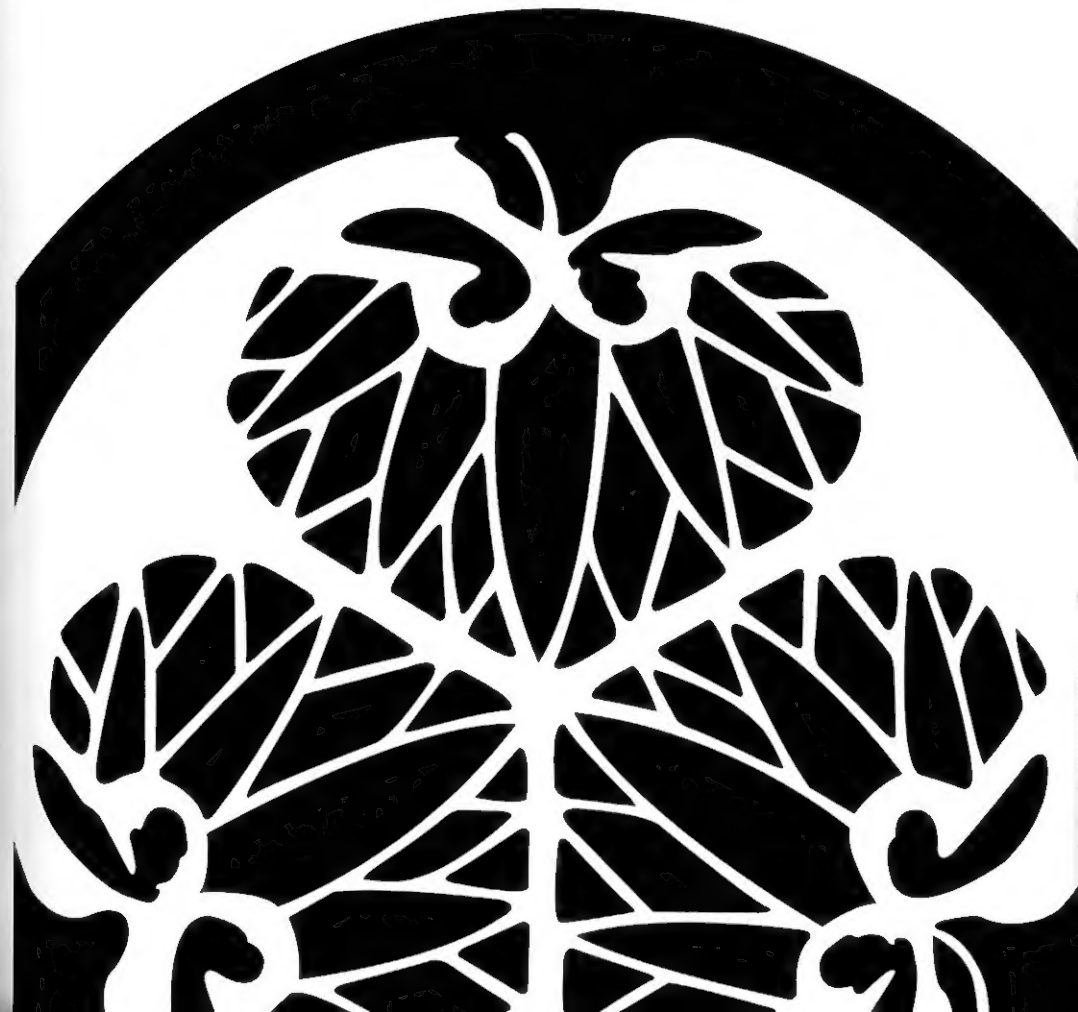
Page 84, panel 4 · And Then...

The biwa player is narrating from *The Tale of the Heike*, which is an ancient Japanese text that relates the fall of the powerful Taira family in the 12th century.

Ōoku: The Inner Chambers

VOLUME 4 · END NOTES

by Akemi Wegmüller



Creator Biography

Fumi Yoshinaga

Fumi Yoshinaga is a Tokyo-born manga creator who debuted in 1994 with *Tsuki to Sandaru* (*The Moon and the Sandals*). Yoshinaga has won numerous awards, including the 2009 Osamu Tezuka Cultural Prize for *Ôoku*, the 2002 Kodansha Manga Award for her series *Antique Bakery* and the 2006 Japan Media Arts Festival Excellence Award for *Ôoku*. She was also nominated for the 2008 Eisner Award for Best Writer/Artist.

Page 94, panel 2 · Kamishimo

Formal attire. It literally means "upper and lower" and is an ensemble that goes over the kimono for formal occasions. The upper section is a sleeveless robe with wide starched shoulders, and the lower section is an undivided hakama.

Page 97, panel 1 · Soon After the New Year

At this time Japan still followed the lunar calendar, so the New Year did not fall in January.

Page 98, panel 5 · Central Enclosure

The Central Enclosure, or *honmaru*, is home to the Outer Chambers, the Shogun's Quarters, and the Inner Chambers.

Page 115 · Narita-ya, Danjuro

The Kabuki actor here is based on the historic Ichikawa Danjuro I, whose stage nickname (*yago*) was Narita-ya. In Kabuki tradition, the audience calls out the actor's name or yago during favorite scenes.

Page 117, panel 3 · Age of the Gods

The gods the woman refers to are Izanagi and Izanami, the divine couple who according to myth gave birth to Japan.

Page 175, panel 2 · Nishijin District

Nishijin is synonymous with elaborate brocade.

Page 183, panel 1 · Koku

One *koku* was equal to about five and a half bushels of rice, and this unit was used both to measure rice itself and to measure agricultural land. Domains were always assessed in terms of koku, i.e. how much rice they yielded.

Page 185, panel 3 · Akō Incident

Also known as the Forty-Seven Ronin Incident.

Page 187, panel 1 · Three Ranks of Vassals

The three ranks during the Edo period were *shinpan*, *fudai*, and *tozama*. Shinpan were dynastic lineages descended from Tokugawa Ieyasu. Fudai were hereditary vassals whose families had sworn allegiance to the Tokugawa before the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Tozama swore allegiance later, and their status was more precarious.

Page 187, panel 1 · Hatamoto

Hatamoto belong to the samurai class and are direct retainers of the shogunate. The term literally means "at the base of the flag," and refers to the position of military commander in charge of defending the army camp and flag.

Ōoku

THE INNER CHAMBERS

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Ooku: The Inner Chambers has been printed in the original Japanese format in order to preserve the orientation of the original artwork.